

LOUISA MATHEWS.

BY

AN EMINENT LADY.

“ The broadest mirth unfeeling Folly wears,

“ Less pleasing far than Virtue's very tears.”

POPE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

L O N D O N :

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LOUISA MATHEWS.

CHAP. I.

SIR George was weak enough to hope, notwithstanding Louisa's declaration, that time, and his incessant assiduities, would effect a change in her heart; which, she acknowledged, was not bestowed elsewhere: for she could not confess to herself that George Montague possessed it. Indeed, she condemned herself so severely for suffering one thought of this pleasing young man to

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obtrude—

obtrude—which it sometimes would do in spite of her efforts—on her mind, that she was secure she could see him become the husband of Lady Eleanor Palmington without a *real* regret, provided she *knew* of it first.

Mr. Abercrombie was Sir George's best friend: he spoke in his favour. Louisa reproached him, in her heart, for forgetting George Montague, till a little reflection made her blush at her own injustice. She convinced Mr. Abercrombie that she was swayed by the most noble, most delicate reasons, for declining the hand of Sir George Berkeley. She had predetermined to make her father a future amendment for the toils he had formerly endured to make
a little

a little provision for her. "He is," she added, "now in years; and growing infirmities will shortly oblige him to retire. I reserve myself wholly for him; to cheer the evening of *his* day is my ambition. He has procured a sufficient resource for our wants; and I will not suffer any other connection to have a claim upon me, while Heaven continues him to my prayers." Mr. Abercrombie told her, that a connection of this kind would afford her more ample means of doing good; that every parent, attached to his child, lived in the hope of bestowing her worthily before he closed his eyes for ever; and that, he trusted, Mr. Mathews's letter, in answer to Sir George Berkland's proposals, would

convince her, that her father's happiness would be infinitely more increased by her becoming the wife of an amiable man, independent of the world, than in administering to his daily wants in an obscure, unknown part of the kingdom, where his contracted income would of necessity drive him. "I trust," she replied, "Mr. Abercrombie, that not even my father's situation, as you have *now* painted it, could tempt me to an unjust action to avoid it. Did my affections meet Sir George Berkland's wishes, I should be grateful to Providence for enlarging my power of making others happy : but only esteeming him as I do, attended with regret that he loves me, and a sincere desire to
transfer

transfer his regards to another object, could I in conscience unite myself to him? I am shocked to find he has wrote to my father; but I have no fears that my father should expect me to take a husband, for whom I feel the most perfect indifference."

Though Louisa had told the truth, yet she had not told *all* the truth: another motive, as prevailing as her own indifference for Sir George Berkland, led her to reject him, but not to forbid him the house. The interest she saw Charlotte Montague take in this excellent young man, made her hope that he in time would be sensible to her claims: but the unfortunate jealousy and hatred which Charlotte conceived for Louisa,

whom she considered as the obstacle to her happiness, made every unfavourable impression on the mind of a man whom she passionately loved. Louisa alone had made the discovery, which she kept secret within her own bosom—not even breathing a thought of it to her friend, Lady Haleborough: and she returned all the insulting, unmerited speeches, of this unhappy, unfortunate girl, with a temper and mildness which arose from compassion. While Louisa condemned her, she pitied; and every new reason which Charlotte gave her to resent her behaviour, created a new motive with Louisa for passing it over. Superior to weakness and injustice herself, she endeavoured to make allowances for others; whom

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CHAP.

C H A P. II.

LORD Bellhammond had assumed such a perfect indifference to Miss Mathews for some months past, that Louisa had acquired the same degree of ease from his neglect she had formerly—before her acquaintance with him—enjoyed. Mr. Montague did, indeed, perform the part of a father to her. Every purchase he made for his daughters, was accompanied with a similar one to Louisa; whom he frequently told, that he would leave independent of the world. He was convinced, from daily observation, that his house was less pleasant to this lovely girl

girl since the marriage of Lady Haleborough, but was at a loss for the cause; yet he saw, with anxious concern, the aversion which Charlotte had conceived for her, and admired the patient submission she shewed to her keen and unmerited satire. When Lucy was at home, these strokes were less frequent, and generally parried by her sister; but a love of admiration, and volatile spirits, led her so perpetually abroad, that Louisa—exposed, and defenceless—received and submitted to the most severe shafts of ridicule. According to Louisa's promise, her father received an account of the change in Mr. Montague's family, which gave him extreme uneasiness; but, perceiving an uniform moderation

deration and propriety in all her conduct, he entreated her to persevere with patience, as every day shortened the time of absence; and while Mr. Montague continued *his* kindness, all the rest was supportable.

The other part of his letter was taken up by enumerating the advantages of independance, and the security of being truly beloved by the man who would take her under all the disadvantages she laboured with; the distresses which might await her, if it pleased God to take him; and the ingratitude of rejecting the first blessing, after a quiet conscience, which Heaven could bestow. He urged her to reward an attached lover with her heart and hand; for he
reposed

reposed so entire a confidence in her, that he doubted not she would have informed him if any prior lover had solicited or obtained it. But all this reasoning and argument was concluded, with conjuring Louisa *not* to become the wife of Sir George, if she had any preference to another; or, without this obstacle, unless she thought she should be happy with him.

It was at this proof of paternal affection that Louisa dissolved into tears, which were interrupted by the happy, exulting Sir George; who had also received a letter from Mr. Mathews, with full approbation of his offers; and a warm hope that Louisa would convert the gratitude, the acknowledged feeling,

to a tenderer sentiment; but professing his determination to let her chuse for herself. With this letter in his hand, he threw himself at her feet; and, with unfeigned ardour, declared the most passionate love for his adored Louisa: expressions which were only replied to with tears. Agonized at the situation he beheld her in, he vehemently condemned himself for having wrote to her father; bid her say the word, and he was gone for ever; or exact any other, if possible, *more* difficult proof of his love, and he would obey her.

“How different a turn,” said Louisa, “does your most generous conduct merit! I am too much agitated to attend to all my loved, affectionate parent,
has

has said on the subject. I have received a request from poor Mrs. Goodricke, to spend a few days with her. Mr. Montague, ever kind, has complied with my wish ; and to-morrow I go. When there, I will enquire into my own mind, and learn whether I *can* acquiesce with my father's wishes. I am too ingenuous, Sir George, to keep you in suspense : I esteem you more and more ; but, I fear, I must still be my own enemy—for such I esteem the rejection of your liberal offers. God knows, I have no other prospect of settlement in view : but the lethargic indifference, which weighs on my heart, makes me anticipate evil.

Sir George entreated her earnestly to allow him to wait on her at Mrs. Goodricke's, and receive his life or death from her lips! "I can reason with you," said he; "but, upon paper, I already know my irrevocable doom. O God! Louisa, take compassion upon me. I cannot survive your cruelty!"

"If you really love me, Sir George," she replied, "you will consider my peace, in preference to your own: if you feel any other sentiment, you do not love."

"Ah, dearest Louisa! my fears are verified: you speak from conviction; and I am, indeed, a wretch! Theory never taught you so certain a truth.

You

You reason from *within*; and I am a wretch !”

The agony of his soul was attended with a burst of audible grief, when Charlotte entered the room. Louisa's pity transferred itself, with electrical swiftness, from her lover to her rival—her now implacable enemy. From this instant, rage, despair, and all the fatal train of corroding jealousy, were cherished, to destroy the lovely and innocent victim. The storm, which was collected in her revengeful bosom, loured in her face; her eyes flashed fire; and, darting their instantaneous glances on Louisa, she thundered the door of the room as she closed it.

“Can I,” said Louisa, “when I behold the havock unrequited love makes in the human heart, Sir George—can I regret it’s absence? When I see the most amiable man reduced to sorrow and tears; the most lively and elegant woman absorbed in grief; and each cherishing a hopeless flame for insensible objects; how, how shall I prevail on my mind, to imbibe it’s pains? Oh! rather let me remain as I am; regard me disinterestedly, and join in the wish. I can reward you, by disposing a charming young woman to hear you, who has the power and the means to reward you. I dare not speak farther; but your merits are acknowledged *elsewhere*. Suffer me to point
the

the path to happiness; and believe me your friend."

"I will not affect to misunderstand you, Miss Mathews."

"Nay, it is all conjecture, Sir George—I may be wrong in my guesses."

"And would you select the first punishment you could command, under Heaven, as a fit return of my love? Cruel Louisa! The woman you allude to is a fiend—I detest her! She would sacrifice her eternal welfare for the gratifications of revenge. I have smarted under her secret plottings. I have witnessed her hatred of innocence and beauty combined. Has she not malignity in every word addressed to

you; and can I ever be brought to forgive her? It is Charlotte I mean. The furies are tame, to her; are amiably meek, in comparison of that resentful woman!"

"When these unhappy passions have their source from disappointed affection, they are pitiable; and the author of the disease should be the last to deride it."

"Most true, Louisa. When I speak to *you*, I truly speak to my other self—I have neither conveyed my suspicions or aversion of Charlotte Montague to any other human creature. She has invariably used every art to strengthen my mother's repugnance to my wishes; she has uniformly traduced you. But virtues,

virtues, like yours, are proof against slander. When I know her disposition, can I be wrought upon to make any apologies for her in my mind? While you dwell under the same roof, with that woman, you are unsafe. I open my whole soul to you, without disguise. She is trying to sacrifice the happiness of her sister, to give colour to her falsehoods. Though she believes there exists a mutual penchant between the Marquis of Pearcefield and Lucy, she is endeavouring to augment his regard for you."

"Regard for me!" said Louisa; "believe me, he has not even common attentions to me for days together: then, indeed, the civil things he crowds

into one hour, are meant as a payment of the debts; and I give him a discharge in full."

"The Marquis has his reasons for keeping aloof from so dangerous a friend. Charlotte endeavours to make him believe that I am rejected for his sake. Nay, Miss Mathews, it is proper you should know the woman who seeks to wrong you. You see I do not believe it, by the calm, unagitated manner, in which I speak."

"Can woman ever degrade her nature thus? Let me hope this is impossible. Would she be unjust? would she sacrifice the peace of a sister, or of any human being, to procure the gratification of her own passion? Pardon me,
Sir

Sir George, if I must doubt this; I owe it to my sex."

"Amiable girl! Incapable of an unworthy thought or action yourself, you draw a favourable opinion of other people: but time and experience will convince you, that there are women exactly the reverse of Louisa; and that, when a woman *is* bad, she is infinitely worse than the most unprincipled man. Her fears operate so far, that they plunge her headlong into excesses of guilt your pure and refined imagination can have no idea of."

"You shock me! Yet Charlotte is not, surely, one of these? What can I do?"

"Take shelter in my faithful bosom; share my fortune; and enable me to ri-

val you in filial attachments to your venerable father."

"And to destroy your mother's peace for ever: and such, you know, your connection with me would prove. Her pride is, indeed, her misfortune; but it is not the part of a child to punish it, or to render it insupportable. I have given you other true reasons for my being averse to your prayers; but, were they all done away, this one would be sufficient. I will never create a difference in the family I become a member of."

"You go to Mrs. Goodricke's to-morrow. I must have permission to wait upon you *once*."

"No,

“ No, Sir George—rely upon me, I will write from thence; and, in the mean time, I urge you to believe that I am your real friend, when I advise you to relinquish a pursuit unattended with a chance of success. Did interest sway me, or the advice of my father, and friend Lady Haleborough, I should have requited your affectionate regards with lethargic indifference; but this injustice is out of my power.”

The appearance of Lady Haleborough and her sisters broke up the conversation, as they came to tell her they were ready to go into the city, whither she accompanied them.

CHAP. III.

WHEN Louisa arrived at poor Mrs. Goodricke's, she was pleased at the warm and affectionate reception she met with from this worthy woman, and shocked to behold the alteration a few months absence had made in her countenance. But the chearful and animated spirits she had amiably assumed, for the meeting with her loved child, had a like power over Louisa's, who recounted the events of her life since they parted, and related every circumstance relative to Sir George Berkeley's

land's disinterested and generous offers ; lamenting, that she was, notwithstanding his acknowledged merits, most insensible to them ; enlarged upon Lady Berkland's dislike, as a sufficient reason, which was contrasted by Mrs. Goodricke, with her father's most earnest desire that she would receive and reward his addresses. " By the bye," said she, " I received a foreign letter, some days ago, inclosed in which was a letter to you, and an intreaty to give it you privately. I trust in my dear girl's good sense and propriety so far, that I deliver it to you ; but first I must read you the few lines addressed to myself in my cover."

" Good

“ Good God ! who can it be from ? ”
said Louisa, in much agitation ; “ not
from——No ! impossible ! ”

“ It is here ; let me read it,” said the
old lady, while she drew on her specta-
cles.

“ MADAM,

“ WHEN I take the liberty of ad-
dressing the inclosed letter to your care,
it is from the knowledge I have derived
of your affection for Miss Mathews ;
which her father, my tutor——”

“ Oh, heavens ! my father is ill.—”

“ No such thing, Louisa.”

“ which her father, my tutor, has so re-
peatedly mentioned with pleasure and
gratitude. Let this affection lead you,

Madam,

Madam, to convey into that amiable girl's hands—if she is at liberty to receive it—the declaration of my attachment to her; and the agony my soul labours under, at the idea of her uniting her fate with Sir George Berkland's, before she receives this renewal of a love—honourable, ardent, and tender. I have left my letter unsealed, on purpose for your perusal, to convince you that my pen is the faithful transcript of my heart, which abhors concealment where all should be open.

“ I am, Madam,

“ Your faithful, humble servant,

“ GEORGE MONTAGUE.”

“ Now,

“ Now, my dear, let me assure you I have not read it,” said she, as she was going out of the room to hasten her dinner and give Louisa leisure to read it.

“ Stay, dear Mrs. Goodricke. Ought I to read this dangerous letter? He is too amiable to be known with indifference—”

“ Which accounts for your insensibility for Sir George Berkland. I *thought* there was more in your conduct than you acknowledged—“Now I have it.” Louisa was beginning her letter; but the tremor of her voice was too great to go through it. She said, she must read it first to herself. At length she began.

“ ACQUAINTED

"ACQUAINTED as I am, most lovely Louisa, with the contents of several letters your father has lately received from England, and the natural application Sir George Berkland has made to secure your assent to his wishes, I am driven by the malice of my unhappy fate, to run the risque of offending you, by presuming to address a letter to the most loved of women, and to declare the most ardent passion that ever possessed the human heart. From the hour I first beheld you, Madam, to the last moment of existence, it has and will be cherished. The desperation attending the bare idea of losing you, is too severe for expression. If that blessed indifference Sir George regrets *still* subsists,

sists, which is my most ardent prayer to Heaven, allow me to hope that no prior attachment places you beyond my power. The ambition of my life shall be to be worthy of my angelic Louisa's regard. I have opened my heart to your father, who commands me to forbear, and not disturb his daughter's repose. Acquainted with the haughty pride of my family, he sees imaginary evils arise; and protests that, if I make overtures to *my* father upon the subject, he will instantly remove you, and retire from the world. This threat, which I feel to be serious, withholds me from intreating my father to allow me the opportunities of pleading my own cause with my most loved Louisa.

“ Are

“ Are the words my agitated lips pronounced at parting, banished from Louisa’s remembrance ; while every syllable *she* uttered, on even indifferent topics, is stamped on *my* memory ? Perhaps, Madam, these agitations will not reach you. If my fate *is* finally settled, your friend will destroy it ; and your father’s intreaty, that his daughter’s repose may remain undisturbed, be complied with—George Montague will not destroy *Lady Berkland’s* repose.”

“ There is phrenzy in the thought, Louisa. My fortune is useless, unless you share it ; for I cannot believe my father will object to it. Lady Haleborough loves you with the tenderest affection,

fection, and has long been the confidante of a brother whose happiness depends upon the reception his declaration meets with. Be secure that I watch and attend to your father's health with a filial devotion; and that the most blessed circumstance of my life will be, the obtaining a lawful claim to contribute to the repose of his future years.

“ Pardon me, Madam, for the presumption I am *now* guilty of. Be generous, and make the utmost allowances for me; judge of my respect, by my former silence; and be persuaded, that the danger of losing you *alone* could have extorted this letter from me *unknown* to your father, who has intreated me

me to forget you; which, by every thing most sacred, is impossible.

“ I am, Madam,

“ With the most perfect devotion,

“ Your most faithful friend,

“ GEORGE MONTAGUE.”

Mrs. Goodricke startled Louisa, by asking which was the destined husband of Lady Eleanor Palmington; as Lord Bellhammond had told her, that a match with one of the Montagues would certainly take place with the heiress. She answered, that she always understood George was the person, but that she had never heard a syllable of it from the Montague family; that she saw the impossibility

impossibility of ever being the wife of George Montague, in a thousand different shapes; and that she should certainly never forget the obligations she owed to the father, by disappointing the hopes he had entertained for his son's union with his ward. "Even suppose I *was* sensible of his extreme merits, I would adhere to this rule of conduct. In situations like *mine*, it is the only safe way to adopt a rule of action, and to adhere to it scrupulously.—"Lead me not into temptation," was my father's parting recommendation. I have graved it on my mind."

"God will assist you, my dear, in these good resolutions. From your character of old Mr. Montague, and the affection

affection he expresses for you, I have a different persuasion. If he loves his son, can he prove it more certainly than by bestowing upon him a woman amiable as you are? He has had opportunity of knowing your worth; and I think it a kind of injustice in you, to suppose he will oppose such an union."

"*You* reason from persuasion: *I* from the strongest conviction. Sir William Archer was rejected by Mr. Montague for his youngest daughter, solely on account of his family; which, though worthy and opulent, was without noble alliance. His grandfather had amassed great riches from trade; the father purchased a baronetage; the son, a captain in the army, and an accomplished man:
but

but the Montagues thought the connection beneath them. For *me* there is not a chance of admission into their family—and I discard the idea. The difference of our situations would be magnified by the prospect they had in view of incorporating Lady Eleanor Palmington's honours with their own."

She then mentioned the unhappy change in Charlotte's temper, which she now supposed might arise from a secret knowledge of George's affection for *herself*, as well as from her attachment to Sir George Berkland. She went still farther, and persuaded herself that old Montague's earnestness in Sir George's behalf, was only to place her beyond his son's power. So ready are we to create reasons

reasons and motives for *others* when our minds are under a pressure, which at any other moment we should discard from our hearts as improbable, often impossible.

C H A P. IV.

"IT is impossible," said Louisa to her old friend (whose breakfast she made by her bed-side) "to undeceive George Montague. I cannot answer his letter—I *ought* not; but would it be generous to let him remain in doubt, or cherish a passion which can never be satisfied? Which way can I act? The whole night has been spent in planning and undoing projects. What can we do?" Mrs. Goodriche said, that it would be ungenerous to
George

George to make Mr. Mathews acquainted with the step he had taken, and serious in the consequences, as her father would be as good as his word in retiring to a little snug retreat, and taking her with him—that whatever pleasures he proposed from seclusion would shortly prove fallacious, as society was necessary to his health, and accustomed to the first in the kingdom, in Mr. Montague's house, he would soon feel that his time hung on his hands. “In difficult cases, my dear Louisa, we must vary our general modes of conduct. I think some articles in your father's letter might be couched in terms *George would comprehend*;” but Louisa rejected the stratagem.

“ Shall I make my father the vehicle of a message upon such an improper occasion? He forbid his pupil to write, he would command me not to answer it. There is one way. I will tell my father Mrs. Goodriche brought me proposals from a young man, of good family and large fortune in reversion, which I have peremptorily declined. He will understand this; and if my father knew the proposal in question, he would make this my answer.” Mrs. Goodriche started an objection to this mode, for she said it was utterly impossible this article could ever come to George’s ears, as Mr. Mathews would never acquaint *him* with the advantageous offers his daughter rejected,

fo

for fear he should think her universal indifference to all who solicited her had originated in a prepossession for himself. "True," said Louisa, "hope is ever at hand, to deceive us."——

While this subject was discussed, a letter from old Mr. Montague was placed in Louisa's hand, brought by his own groom, who waited to know whether there was any answer. She broke open the seal, and read the chilling beginning of "Miss Mathews." "My God," said she, "all is not right!" She read the following words to her petrified hearer:

"Miss MATHEWS,

"I have long hoped that the visit

D 3

"you

“ you proposed making to Mrs. Good-
“ riche would take place, as I designed
“ to acquaint you, during the time,
“ that your stay in Cavendish-square
“ was no longer required, as Lady
“ Haleborough’s marriage had made a
“ companion very necessary to Miss
“ Montagues. I shall send all the
“ trunks and boxes belonging to you
“ without loss of time, and I desire to
“ receive by the servant whatever de-
“ mands you have upon me.

“ As I have sought for this oppor-
“ tunity, I desire you to waste no time
“ in vain reasonings upon the subject.
“ I wish you well sincerely, and am
“ your humble servant,

“ ARTHUR MONTAGUE.”

“ P. S. If

" P. S. If you value your father's
" repose, assign your return to Mrs.
" Goodriche's, as taking place at *her*
" particular desire. Make no parties
" in this affair, for I am certainly my
" own master."

The shock and astonishment this letter occasioned were beyond description. " Can I believe my own senses? It is certainly his hand-writing—but how unlike him—how unprovoked is this cruel usage?" Her tears flowed fast. " I must doubt it," said she, " it is Charlotte's work; I will examine the groom." She then called him in, and asked who had delivered that letter into his hands? The man replied, his master had given it.

and desired him to lose no time in waiting for an answer, but afterwards he called him back, and said, bring an answer from Louisa. While the man took some refreshment, the afflicted girl, and her soothing friend, composed the following reply :

“ The demands I have upon Mr.
“ Montague are five and twenty pounds,
“ my cloaths, and the restoration of my
“ peace of mind, which he has so inju-
“ riously deprived me of for the pre-
“ sent ; but it is beneath me to resent
“ such treatment. Be secure, Sir, I
“ shall not distress my father, by a re-
“ lation of your extraordinary manner
“ of distressing me. I am too much
“ chagrined

"chagrined at the circumstance, to

"say any more on the subject.

"I am, Sir,

"Your humble servant,

"LOUISA MATHEWS."

The more she reflected upon this event, the more she was afflicted. "Be assured," said she, "the rash unthinking George Montague has wrote to his father, and the immediate effects of his passion fall on my devoted head. If I write a letter of humble entreaty, to know in *what* I have offended, it will be construed into a mean desire to keep well with the very people who thus cruelly, wantonly, and inhumanly insult me—but yet this is my duty. I

D. 5.

will!

will act right, whatever they do. I will recal that letter, and write by the post. Are all men hypocrites? Mr. Montague kissed me at parting, and appeared on the most friendly footing. Can Courts teach this disguise of the heart?" and fresh tears flowed at the recollection of this apparent duplicity.

C H A P. V.

ON the fourth day after the receipt of this astonishing letter, while Louisa was actually employed in writing Sir George Berkland the final answer to her father's arguments, he arrived at the door of Mr. Goodriche's cottage, and apologized for his visit by saying the torment of his mind could scarcely be greater in cruel certainty than in the present suspense. He saw her look pale, languid, and unhappy; and he heard this sudden alteration in

her appearance was owing to conflicts

in her mind upon his account. He reproached his own heart for having occasioned this lovely girl one hour of anxiety ; when in fact he would have thought the sacrifice of his dearest hopes a happiness, to have secured her peace of mind. He was silent, dejected, and pale ; he dreaded the subject he came purposely to talk over—anticipated the sentence of expulsion he saw she designed to pronounce—and abandoned himself to a sorrow he had no longer power to conceal or suppress.

The state of Louisa's mind was less enviable than even Sir George's, with a heart whose benevolence was unbounded—whose perpetual wish it was
to

to promote the felicity of others; she found that her fate compelled her to repay the most generous attachment, with the keenest disappointment; she was suffering under unjust and unmerited censure; and the very person who had thus injured her, forbid her to appeal to the only real friend she had in the world, and gave as the reason for so extraordinary a request, the desire to preserve her father's repose. Supported by internal evidence that she had never wilfully erred, she consoled herself with the comfortable reflexion that though all the world should unite in condemnation, God and her conscience would acquit her. They sat down to a dinner Mrs. Goodriche had taken particular

particular pains to furnish, out of respect to Louisa's friend; but the weight on their hearts precluded the desire of eating. Poor Mrs. Goodriche, whose sensibility was keen as her amiable guest's, pretended to be busy with her own plate, though in fact she was unable to swallow; the cloth was removed, when Sir George bid his servant be ready with his horse as soon as possible. "When do you mean to return to town, Miss Mathews?"

"Never, Sir George; I have quitted Mr. Montague's for ever."

"Quitted Mr. Montague's! I hope not.—You never mentioned a syllable of it to me."

"Very

"Very true; I *cou'd not*, at that time: but you must excuse me saying any thing more on the subject—than, that we are parted again for ever. Mr. Goodrich receives the wanderer again," said she, with a laugh—most foreign indeed to her soul.

He was lost in astonishment, and professed the sincerest regret on Mr. Montague's account, who, he believed, loved Louisa better than either Lucy or Charlotte. He always expressed the greatest admiration of her talents and disposition, and lamented that the two daughters, just mentioned, were so much her inferiors in mental endowments.

"Louisa was once all *that* in Mr. Montague's opinion," said the afflicted girl,

girl, "but those opinions are now reversed. Let me avoid the subject.—I was writing upon *another*—more interesting when you arrived; it is not quite concluded, but you can receive it now, and peruse it at your leisure. Be assured, Sir George, my friendship and perfect esteem are yours; our affections are not in our power."

He told her he should instantly go abroad; that in all probability he should follow the Montagues, and see her father, to whom he would carry any letters or parcel she entrusted to his care. "If I take my chance, am I likely to find you at home? or shall I name a day when I come to receive your orders?" She replied, that she
never

never wanted preparation to give her friends a hearty welcome, and she should always consider him as one she had a warm interest in. She said, "Mrs. Goodriche, if you neglect my garden, the only thing I pique myself upon understanding, you affront me. Louisa, my dear, do the honours, and conduct Sir George over *my grounds*." She did so, and the opportunity was too tempting to be resisted. The subject of his errand to the cottage was begun, and the discarded situation Louisa regretted, led her importunate lover to renew all his impassioned entreaties; rank, fortune, and independence courted her acceptance; and a heart more warmly devoted to her, than to health
and

and all the blessings of the world united. My existence is wrapt up in you, and yet you abandon me to despair. Trust me, most angelic, most lovely of women, that I would forbear a repetition of my distraction, if any prepossession had dwelt in that bosom of purity. My hopes were founded, and my presumption strengthened by your declaration, that you was not engaged to some man fortunate in the extreme, fortunate as I am unhappy."

"I had hoped," she replied, "that your own good sense would secure you from any fresh conversation upon a subject harassing to both, to me particularly, as I have a thousand regrets at refusing a favour, so amiably so generously

generously proffered, while you have, amidst your chagrins, the pleasure of having conferred an obligation never to be forgotten. I am too much indebted to you, to allow you to encourage hopes which can never be realized, a circumstance I consider as my misfortune." He now entreated her to give him some slight memorial of her regard, which might afford him some consolation when eternally separated from her, which she refused, with saying, "a wise physician would not suffer a fevered patient to drink brandy." All these memorials of tender attachments, when they were never to be rewarded by a union of the parties, were as detrimental as this draught in
a raging

a raging fever." While she said this, however, she gathered a sprig of mirtle, and presenting it to him, she said, "This resembles my friendship, wear it, for it is an ever-green." He grasped her hand, and hurrying from her without saying a word, he mounted his horse, and returned to town. "How cruelly perverse is my fate," said she, as she took one solitary turn in the garden after his departure; "with every estimable quality to render himself beloved, my foolish heart rejects him, and against its better knowledge cherishes a hopeless passion for one, whose family despise me, use me ill, and destroy my peace. Oh, George! George! were all other obstacles done

done away, *these* would for ever
place an insuperable bar between
us."

C H A P. VI.

AS Louisa re-entered the room, she said, " Since Sir George Berkeley proposes following the Montagues, Mrs: Goodriche, I think it would be best for you to entrust him with a few lines to George Montague, acknowledging the receipt of his letter. The communication of it to me, and the disapprobation and concern it occasioned, my total rejection of the contents, and my determination to read no letters whatever, clandestinely sent ; assure

sure him that Miss Mathews could not bestow a serious thought on the subject, which had so many impossibilities to encounter, and advise him to forbear any further attempts of the like nature, as Louisa had exacted a promise that you would never convey a second to her hand; and I do seriously exact that promise, my friend.—George Montague is an engaged man, were there no other impediments in the way.”

Mrs. Goodriche approved of this plan, and accordingly wrote her a few lines to be ready against Sir George's expected visit. And Louisa sat down to write to Lady Haleborough, and to entreat her by that friendship she had hitherto shewn her, to mention what undesign-

undesigned part of her conduct had given offence to Mr. Montague, that she had ever studiously endeavoured to purchase the esteem as well as reputation of so respectable a character ; and that till his severe dismissal reached her hands in the form of a letter, she had sincerely believed these endeavours had been attended with success.—She said she regretted the hasty answer the groom had carried back in writing.—If it was not couched in respectful expressions, it was in consequence of the irritation her mind had conceived at unmerited injuries. And with new entreaties to her amiable friend, she concluded a letter which had cost her many tears.

Day after day did she wait for an
answer

answer to this letter, but in vain. "Lady Haleborough," said she, in tears, "abandons me as well as the rest of her family.—Am I to blame for George Montague's imprudence? for, doubtless, he has wrote to his father. This surely is more than unjust—'tis inhuman. But, thank God, though my mind is afflicted and torn, it is free from internal reproach—Oh, may it ever, ever continue so!—I *may* be unhappy—but I never *can* be wretched—while my heart acquits me." She felt composed—in comparison of what she was, when she beheld the postman pass by the cottage without knocking at the door.—"God's will be done," said she, with energy—and walked down stairs to accompany her friend, who was

watering her flowers. She joined in the occupation, and imbibed from the charming scene which profuse nature had spread before her a part of its harmony. The sun was just setting, on a warm and bright evening in October, not a branch moved; the flocks in the neighbouring fields, and the sheep in the distant folds were alike disposed to enjoy the uncommon stillness of the hour. Her whole soul became tranquilized, and, addressing herself to the great Author of *all*, with energy she repeated,

“ O let some other theme my soul employ,

“ Than empty transient unsubstantial joy.

“ The stars shall fade---the sun shall lose

“ its flame,

“ But thou, O God,---for ever shine the

“ same.”

C H A P.

C H A P. VII.

THOUGH delicacy to Louisa, and submission to her commands, had prevented Sir George Berkland from any further enquiries upon the subject of her leaving Mr. Montague's family, yet the event, and the secrecy she had observed during his last visit in Cavendish-square, had awakened his curiosity to a painful degree—the anxiety which was evident in her countenance made him certain *all* was not right, and the wish to render her some

essential service was, if possible, heightened by her concealment of her cares. He determined to call at Mr. Montague's and try to lead them to the subject, if he observed that they endeavoured to avoid it, then to introduce it, and, if possible, effect a reconciliation between people who had lately been so dear to each other.

When he stopped at Mr. Montague's door he learnt that the family were gone to Richmond for a week. He then enquired when Miss Mathews returned. "God knows, Sir," said the porter, "we have strange orders—orders never to let her enter the house again. What the cause is, none of us know, but my master never desires to have her name mentioned.

mentioned. He called her ungrateful, but do not know what has passed. They parted the best friends. Master kissed her when he put her into the chaise, and he had her room new carpeted, to surprize her when she came home again; but a penny-post letter from her yesterday put the whole house in confusion. Miss Charlotte is vexed to the heart—she is quite ill, and trembles at every turn like an aspen leaf. Lady Haleborough was here in the morning, and locked up all Miss Mathews's papers, and certain sure she blames the young lady; for she said to her sister, not meaning any one should overhear her, "how I have been deceived in her."

Sir George was too deeply affected by every word to disguise the interest he had in this information. He asked for some brandy, for he was very ill; the man got it; and knowing the attachment to Louisa, he meant to administer peace when he prayed God she might not be guilty. Sir George was almost distracted; he desired a servant might be sent for a post-chaise to Oxford-street, as he thought this mode of conveyance to Richmond would be more expeditious than his own horses.

Within three quarters of an hour he was in it, in order to enquire the particulars of this unlooked for event of the Montagues, for his anxiety was now insupportable. The whole family were denied,

denied, and the servant said, with some hesitation, that they were in town. He then mentioned the information he had received in Cavendish-square. The man said then, that they were an airing, but Miss Charlotte Montague was visible in the garden. "I must see some of the family," said Sir George, and walked forward through the saloon to the garden, where he joined Charlotte, whose excessive perturbation convinced him she was not ignorant of the motives which led him thither.

After giving her sufficient time to recover, he asked, "when Louisa returned?"

She said, "to her extreme concern, never. Her father had at length dis-

covered some traits in her character he did not approve; he best knew what they were. If report said true, she congratulated Sir George on his escape, but she was the last to believe an ill-natured story"— "for God's sake, relieve my mind," said Sir George, "what are the reports? I entreat you tell me. I have been out of town. I know nothing."

"The reports are, that she has long carried on—for God's sake never mention that *I* told you any thing upon the subject; but I know the interest *you* must take upon this occasion—protest you will not acknowledge to my father that I told you—"

"Oh depend upon me—you keep me upon the rack!"

The

The reports are, that she has long carried on an intrigue"—

"False as Hell——falser——with whom?"

"Oh, if it *is* false, I had better not tell with whom——"

"Why, why torment me so barbarously? Tell me, I conjure you."

"Why, there are three people mentioned. Sir William Archer is believed to be the happy man who has superseded Sir George Berkland, but I find Lord Bellhammond has suffered in the public opinion, for he came here to-day to contradict a report, which he said was rife every where, that he had carried off the prize. The third is—I cannot mention the most probable of

any—yet my fears of my father are not now begun.”

“ God of Heaven, clear the immaculate innocence of my angel love. Tho’ I meet my death in the attempt—I will drag the infernal calumniator into light—I will see your father.—I will not be deceived.”

“ For what purpose? He will not exchange a word upon the subject; he has wrote this day to recal Mr. Mathews.—Poor old man! my heart bleeds for him; for I fear he has much reason to blush at——

“ False, detestable slander!—I dined yesterday with the most perfect of God’s works at Mrs. Goodricke’s.”

“ At Mrs. Goodricke’s!—Did she
not

not make an excuse to prepare you for the sequel of this astonishing piece?—What did she say?”

“ Nothing—but that she should *not* return?”

“ Her silence is a mark of wisdom—poor deluded girl.—Lady Haleborough has given up all defence of her, and Lady Haleborough is not apt to desert any person who can be defended.”

“ In my particular situation, Miss Charlotte Montague, I cannot be ceremonious—If you will lead me to the room your father is in, it will save me the trouble of searching every one thro’ the house. By all that’s sacred, I will see him before I depart, and I should wish to owe the obligation to you.”

“ I believe you *now* ; but it is the first time Sir George ever thought a favour from me worth receiving.”

“ What should make you think so, Madam ?”

“ Experience,—continued experience ?”

“ I am quite unconscious of what part of my conduct, so foreign to my nature, should have given you so unfortunate a persuasion.”

“ I don't believe you are conscious of the neglect—cutting neglect you shew to every creature, when the *immaculate innocent*, as you call her, is present.”

“ This is trifling with time, Miss Montague ; and my anxieties and indignation

dignation are too keen for controul.—
Lead me, I entreat you, to your father.”

“Impossible, Sir George—I dare not—I am forbidden to use her name.”

“Is Mr. Montague at home?” said Sir George.

“He is not, nor is there any the smallest chance of your seeing him this day; for he is not at home.”

“Then I will wait till he is. He will pardon the liberty I take when he reflects upon what I *must* suffer. By all that is sacred, Miss Montague, I will see your father,—Thank God, he is now descending the garden steps.”

“Remember, Sir George Berkland, —remember you promised not to tell

who

who gave you the information about Louisa—He so positively forbid me; but when I see you in pain, all my resolution forsakes me.—Do not punish my weakness—by exposing me to my father's resentment.”

C H A P. VIII.

SIR George Berkland said, " Mr. Montague, I am glad to see you, Sir;—and sincerely wish that this meeting, like all our former,—was not occasioned by the incomprehensible event which has happened."

" Let anxiety, Mr. Montague, be my apology for forcing my way into your house against your positive commands."

" Positive commands! I never gave any such, nor am I ever denied to my friends."

Charlotte

Charlotte instantly said to her father, "Doubtless, then, Sir, the servants mistook you, for Sir George was denied admittance.—I will myself go and clear the mystery up. By the bye, I dare say, Lucy's orders for receiving no company while she is under her maid's hands, has been misinterpreted."

"Possibly—possibly," said Mr. Montague—but a degree of embarrassment in Charlotte, the inseparable companion of guilt, was apparent to the scrutinizing eye of Sir George, who intreated Mr. Montague to tell him the particulars of an affair which depressed him beyond the power of expression."

"Most readily will I tell you what I

do

do know—but, indeed I am quite in the dark about what motives could have induced Louisa to so unnatural, so improper a conduct. On Monday morning she asked permission to go to Mrs. Goodricke's, which with pleasure I complied with—my own carriage into which I myself handed her—and my groom attended her.—We were as we had ever been—upon the best terms ; I even saluted her at parting.—When the carriage returned, I learnt from the servants that she ordered them to stop at the Bell at Hounslow, and bid them acquaint Mr. and Miss Montagues, that she desired they would not trouble their heads about her, as she had other protection she liked better ; and that she
should

should write in a few days for her clothes. Where she is now, God knows!

“So do I,” said Sir George in agony.—I dined with her yesterday at Mrs. Goodricke’s. She told me she never should return to town, but entreated me to forbear inquiry, as she could not enter into particulars. She looks extremely ill—and, affecting a laugh, said, Mrs. Goodricke has received the wanderer.”

“Well, Sir George, I examined my servants—the postillion was a hired one, as were the horses. My own lad being ill, Tom Watkins the groom repeated over to *me* her orders to stop at the bell at Hounslow, and her wonderful

ful message. I inquired whether any person seemed to be waiting for her. He saw none; but by the ringing of the bell he knew there was people in the house; that he saw Louisa open a door at the top of the stairs, and walk in; and that curiosity tempted him to stop there five minutes—when he heard her excessively merry—and laugh heartily.”

“Mysterious indeed.—Can I see the groom?”

“You should with pleasure; but he has asked leave to visit a sick mother, to-day, and is gone to town. We can only reason in the dark. I will own to you that her life has not been pleasant since Lady Haleborough’s departure.—

ture.—My other daughters were always prejudiced against her—what occasioned it I know not: but as I thought their prejudices unjust, I endeavoured to make her amends by my attentions. I was fond of the girl to a great degree, and I verily believe it was mutual. She gave as an argument for not accepting your hand, that she preferred my protection to all the world.”

“ Report says as much, Sir, and you acknowledged it to my face; the scandalous infamy of your connexion is the common talk of the town; 'tis not to vindicate the character of a strumpet, but to punish your crime in proposing to foist your mistress upon me, that I demand satisfaction.”

“ Is

"Is the man mad?" said Mr. Montague, with astonishing coolness. "What do you allude to? or am I out of my wits?"

"Dastardly coward!" replied Sir George—"Seducer of innocence, and betrayer of friendships."

"Did I not believe your intellects to be deranged, I would not have allowed you to breathe at *this* moment.—Villain! explain your reports—they are new to me."

"That you are the elected protector of her person, over which your power has long been unlimited? that you have met your reward in her desertion of *you* for the arms of *another*? These, Sir, are the reports. Sir William Archer has the
glory

glory of this wondrous atchievement."

"You are certainly mad! Depart my house, Sir George. Your situation excites a pity which you do *not* merit. Your charge of a connection between the daughter of my friend, and me is of that heinous malignant dye, that its author shall be brought to condign punishment, if money or perseverance can effect it. Farther than this, Sir, is beneath me."

"I believe, Mr. Montague, the report is false. My whole soul is so agitated—that I am not answerable for its impulses. I learnt that this infamous report was common and credited; but, I believe it is false as the infamous propagator."

"You

" You *there*, Sir George, imply a single person.—Who did you learn this from ?

" I was sworn to secrecy ; and tho' I despise the exacter of it, yet I will not give up my author."

" A court of equity shall compel you, then, Sir : till then I do not desire to see your face again.—There is the way."

Sir George replied, " you shall hear of me, Sir, without delay, depend upon *that*"—and quitted the house.

C H A P. IX.

DURING his ride he revolved all that passed, and accused or acquitted Mr. Montague alternately, as he or Louisa occupied his particular attention. Restless, and worn out with anxiety, he resolved to see Lady Haleborough, and learn farther particulars of her, before she could know what had passed between her father and him at Richmond. He arrived in town just at five o'clock, and riding up Arlington-street met this Lady in her carriage going to dinner. He

He stopt it, and asked her whether she could allow him five minutes conversation; which she excused herself from, as Lord Haleborough had desired her to take him up at the House of Lords at a quarter before five—and it was now on the stroke of it; “but if you will call at nine,” said she, “I will be at my own house—for I am at little loss to guess your errand. I suppose Lady Bellhammond’s dangerous illness is all a pretext: drive on,—for God’s sake, don’t detain me.”

Tortured anew by this supposition, and Charlotte’s former information about such a report, she waited with the utmost impatience for the arrival of the hour which was to unravel this new mys-

tery.—How to get rid of the previous time was the difficulty.—He went into Kelsey's in St. James's-street; and being at an hour of the day when a fruiterer's shop is deserted, he threw himself into a chair, and asked Mr. Cooper to give him the news-papers.—The first article which met his eye was the following:

“ Within these few days the public conversation has been wholly engrossed by an elopement of a very beautiful girl from Cavendish-square;—about whom there are many and various reports. We have not been able to ascertain which is most probable; but we give those which have come to our knowledge, in order to enable our readers

ders to form their own opinion. The first is, that the Lady in question is the daughter of a clergyman now abroad, and consigned to the care and protection of a man of reputed character and fortune, as companion to his daughters; but that he unfortunately construed the word *protection* to an unlimited power over her person; which mistake was the fair one's persuasion also. So well have the enamoured parties managed the matter, that, till a demand of increased salary from the Lady produced a quarrel, the family were quite unsuspicious of the intercourse.

“ The second, more probable is, that the gallant, gay Lord B—llh—mm—d, well known as a man of wit and gal-

F 2

lantry,

lantry, has robbed his intimate friend of his *chere ami*; and by a liberal settlement has made the enamoured fair one independent for life; and the last more natural report, and which seems to be certain, as Sir W—ll—m A—ch—r is gone for the continent, is, that the Baronet has enticed the Lady to quit the noble Earl, who is now railing at the universal treachery and licentiousness of the times."

Sir George Berkland put the paper in his pocket, and went to the printer on purpose to learn who had carried the above article. The man said, the editor was out of town, and that he could give no account whatever of it; that all the newspapers had it, and he supposed

posed from the same quarter; that the editor must be in town on the morrow, and at one he would be in the way, when the gentleman would be certain to find him, and learn any further particulars.

The hour now approached when the appointment made by Lady Haleborough was to take place. He arrived at her house a quarter of an hour before she returned. Surrounded with fears, he, nevertheless, believed Miss Mathews was not guilty of evil, tho' she was of imprudence. Her being with Mrs. Goodricke contradicted all the reports but that of her intimacy with Mr. Montague; and he could not, upon serious reflection, believe,

that a being so apparently amiable in her whole deportment, should owe the appearance of crime to such abandoned hypocrisy.

CHAP.

C H A P. X.

WHEN Lady Haleborough entered, she saw what ravages affliction can make in the human form in a few short hours. Sir George had really (an orange excepted) not swallowed any thing since the brandy the porter gave him in Cavendish-square at one o'clock; and what with fatigue of body as well as mind, he was scarcely able to raise his voice sufficiently to be heard. "Will you," said he, "dear Lady Haleborough, declare"

F 4

from

from first to last, what you know about Louisa, I will not interrupt you?"

"What I know for *certain*, Sir George, is so interwoven with what other people know for *certain* also, that I am little capable of giving you information upon the subject. She asked my father's permission to go to Mrs. Goodricke's, which he granted, and parted with the family in the most amicable manner imaginable. Tom Watkins, my father's groom, brought a most extraordinary account of her stopping at the Bell at Hounslow, and sending a verbal message, "that she desired no trouble might be taken about her, as she had chosen other protection:" which protection I sadly fear
is

is Lord Bellhammond—notwithstanding his visiting every house to contradict the reports.

Sir George interrupted her, saying “ she is not with *him*—I yesterday dined with her at Mrs. Goodricke’s.

“ You surprise me ; but that is only to counteract *report*, I am persuaded, to elude reproach. Lord Bellhammond, as I told you, was all over the town yesterday to be *seen*, but this morning my Lord Haleborough learnt at his door, that he quitted town that night at seven o’clock, as he had received an express that his Countess was dangerously ill in Wales. This looks extremely suspicious, and the particular interest you took in her affairs obliges me to

own, that Lord Belhammond had long made her overtures of a dishonourable nature, which at that time she rejected with scorn. Eight hundred a year was the price he offered her, but she behaved upon that occasion with the utmost propriety. This is *entre nous*, for my father would deem it an insult offered to himself—such proposals under *his* roof. My sisters were never cordial to her, but Lucy protests she never saw any thing in her conduct to blame, and is now most anxious to bring every thing to light, as she thinks her incapable of the alledged crimes. Charlotte has mentioned to Lord Halebrough, in confidence, her fears that her father was too partial to Louisa, and

and her rejection of you, Sir George, as the proof of its being mutual. Lord Haleborough is perswaded this is the fact, which however I neither *can* nor *will* believe. I know it is false. Whatever Miss Mathews may be, I am convinced my father is scrupulously honourable. I received a letter from her a few days ago, which my husband advised me not to open, as I wish not to run the risk of thinking unkindly of my father, or rather my Lord did, for I should certainly have opened it. I gave the letter to Charlotte, who carried it."

Sir George then produced the newspapers, and told her that he had been to the printer, to know who sent the

articles, though he was almost sorry he had done so. He then told of his Richmond visit, and the threat Mr. Montague gave at parting. She regretted this extremely, and besought him to make some advances to peace, as her father had been a warm and kind friend to him on a former occasion.

“ That is not so *certain*, Lady Haleborough,” he replied with warmth. “ He might wish to get rid of his mistress at my expence.”

“ You injure Mr. Montague, Sir George—you know him to be incapable.”

“ I *believed* him to be so—I *believed* Louisa to be so—but with grief of heart, Lady Haleborough, I must suspend my judgment.”

C H A P.

C H A P. XI.

ON the next day he resolved to observe the hour of appointment with the editor of the newspaper; but he had no other object in view than to ascertain whether these articles came from Bellhammond, or elsewhere; but his intentions were frustrated, as the editor did not chuse to be seen, the printer said, he would not be in town that week. Nothing now remained but to go to Louisa—upbraid her with her own—thank God for this escape—and quit England immediately.

He

He lost no time, but ordering his horse and telling his groom he did not want him, he set out for Mrs. Goodricke's, where he learnt Louisa was not got up, that she was very much indisposed, and unable to see him. Sir George was persuaded she had quitted the house, and he told Mrs. Goodricke that he solemnly believed she was many miles off—astonished at such an idea, she assured him he should see Miss Mathews who was extremely ill from a violent flurry on the preceding night. A gentleman from London came last night, said she, at ten o'clock, we were fearful about opening the door, when he said he came with a message from Mr. Montague, and the messenger
his

his particular friend. Mary opened the door and admitted Lord Bellhammond, who came on propose to make peace between the Montagues and her; he tried to persuade her to go to town to-day with him, which she positively refused; but we have agreed to go by ourselves to-morrow, and apply to Lady Haleborough—for my dear girl is half distracted with care.

“ You were deceived, Mrs. Goodricke. Lord Bellhammond is the partner of her guilt—Lady Haleborough will not receive her—she never opened her letter, I had it from her own lips—read that newspaper, I only want to bid her receive my thanks for rejecting me as a husband, and quit England for ever

ever—Oh, *who*, who could have thought it !”

“ A mad man only—amiably injured innocent—God will avenge her cause—inhuman wretches to blast her character thus.—Lord Bellammond is a wretch she abhors—a wretch who has tried to corrupt her with promises of marriage at his wife’s death, and a settlement of eight hundred a year—she detests him.”

“ You believe this, Madam, I doubt not.”

“ The offers were made through *me*, *myself*—to give her new cause of abhorrence. I told her that he offered a thousand pound as the price of my integrity, which he has repeatedly done ;
the

the monster would not go till one o'clock, Louisa never quitted my arm—told him she would die sooner than owe obligation to a man she despised; but the article he read her from a newspaper almost killed her, and made us resolve to go to town to-morrow, let the consequences be what they will."

"Wonder not," said Louisa, at entering the room pale, yet more exquisitely beautiful than pen can describe; "wonder not at my rising upon hearing the voice of Sir George Berkland, whose doubts of my honour have penetrated my soul with a keen agony—God will lend me life to clear my spotless fame, and then in mercy, I trust to recall, a gift I cannot enjoy.—The infamous

Lord

Lord Bellhammond, my aversion, my abhorrence, my detestation, I doubt not has given birth to the corroding article inserted in the papers."

Sir George Berkland then gave her the *one* he had brought. She read it.—Her eyes were fixed—she ceased to breathe, the fainting continued long enough to make them alarmed. What have you done—what I have done, said Mrs. Goodricke, in despair—you have murdered Louisa; she opened her eyes, while Sir George Berkland in distraction swore he would not long survive her, cordials were immediately administered, and she recovered to experience a sorrow—the innocent sufferer *only can know*.

The

“ The walls of this house are so thin,” said she, “ that I could not avoid hearing every thing which passed between you both while I was up stairs. I will not apply my time to condemn the easy facility with which *those*, whom I believed to be my warmest friends, receive and credit my disgrace, to clear *myself* is *all*, *all* I have at heart. Oh! my father, my father.” Sir George dropt off his chair, and with some difficulty was recovered from a similar fit to Louisa’s — the consequence of extreme pangs.

“ Injured innocent, adored Louisa, I abjure every idea inimical to that purity I know you to possess — Jealous disappointed love ; and the maddening information I received from the Montague’s of your message from Hounslow.”

From

“ From Hounslow? Message from Hounslow, whatever was at Hounslow, I came the Wickstead way.”

“ Not at the Bell at Hounslow— Mr. Montague himself is my authority. He related his examination (that was his particular expression) of Tom Watkins the groom, about a message that *you* had sent from Hounslow, and the declaration, *that you should not return, having put yourself under protection you liked better.*”

Gracious God, enable me to clear myself! What is this iniquitous plot to answer, and who is the enemy of a helpless woman, who never injured one human being? O God convert the heart, which thus transcendently wicked is lost to virtue. I will now shew
you,

you, Sir George, the letter Mr. Montague's groom brought *me* at his master's command—read that first, and here is my reply. I doubted my senses when I received it, the servant, before Mrs. Goodricke, protested his master placed it in his hands. Do you doubt the writing?

“No! I do not, but the extraordinary message from Hounslow, made *this* reply, not an improper one. Mr. Montague had one delivered by Tom Watkins as coming from you, at Hounslow.”

“By all most sacred,” said Louisa, “I never sent it—I never gave cause of offence to Mr. Montague—we parted the best friends. He said he should enjoy
my

my return; and from that moment till the time of my receiving this cruel unmerited letter, 'nothing on my part could have happened to justify its contents.'

"God forgive her, Louisa, but my suspicions have selected another object than Lord Bellhammond to rest on—I mean the intruder the last morning we met in town."

"A martyr to unjust suspicion myself, I cannot run the risque of accusing another, who may be equally innocent. I have never injured any body."

"Why, my dear Louisa," said Mrs. Goodricke, "did you decline telling Sir George Berkland of the letter *before*

fore?—you made a mystery of your dismissal at the time—for what purpose?—do explain—I did mean to ask you, but forgot it.”

“ I will tell you—gratitude and obligation. Mr. Montague had till now been the kindest friend; he had conferred a thousand favours upon me, which I loved to acknowledge—they were so many reasons why I should not expose him. I thought his conduct in this cruel dismissal so unfair, so inhuman, that I could no longer esteem him, but I determined to suffer in silence, and not clear myself at the expence of a family, who have been likewise kind to my father. Will you carry a few lines from me to Mr. Montague, with a request

request to be suffered to wait upon him?"

Sir George answered, " Mr. Montague and I have quarrelled, I am certain I shall not be admitted. I think your best way would be to send Mrs. Goodricke, and bid her produce proofs that Tom Watkins came *on with you* to this place through Wickstead—that you *never* went near Hounslow, and that you *never* sent any message. I will endeavour to see Lady Haleborough—and Mrs. Goodricke will take refreshment and a bed at my house, till her purpose is answered—when I will accompany her hither. I think the controversion of this point is the most necessary. If *its* falshood is detected, all the rest falls to the ground of course." This step met the approbation of all parties, and
the

the rest of the day was spent in making poor Mrs. Goodricke easy at taking a journey of fifteen miles, which for the last thirty years she had not done, and in affording Louisa some hope that the odium which at present attached itself to her, would be done away before her sorrow had premeditated her release from this world. Sir George took his leave after a thousand protestations, that he would never relinquish his pursuit of avenging her injuries, but with life; and conjuring her to forget the crime he had committed against *her*, through the ardour of his passion. She thanked him, and added, "Would to God it were as easy to *forget* injuries as to *forgive* them."

C H A P. XII.

IT was very late before he got to town, but his mind was infinitely calmer than it had been for the three last days, yet he was so occupied with the service he hoped to render her with Lady Haleborough, in the morning, that he could not shut his eyes, or in the least degree compose himself to rest. Never did the hours appear so long to him as an expectant lover, as upon *this* occasion; there he was to clear the honour and restore the peace of an innocent woman—affection out of the ques-
tion

tion, it was a task for a benevolent mind to covet. And so rigid were Sir George Berkland's notions of honour, that he felt a kindred pang, when any other person's was impeached. And in consequence of this generous sentiment, would have undergone any difficulties to enable the sufferer to be acquitted. If this was his conduct to strangers, what new ardour must it acquire in serving the woman he adored!

At eight he arose, and taking a slight breakfast, quitted his house for Lady Haleborough's, who was not risen. He waited impatiently till eleven o'clock, when her Ladyship entered the breakfast room.—There was a studied formality in her manner, which convinced

Sir George, that Mr. Montague's daughter related the conversation he had had with her father at Richmond; but he forbore any remark on her coolness, and began the relation of all he had learnt from Louisa.

"Pardon me," said Lady Haleborough; "I wish not to learn any thing more about her—right or wrong; she has been the cause of family misunderstandings, and I request to be troubled no further upon the subject."

"I never believed any situation could make Lady Haleborough *unjust*?" said Sir George—"and to preclude a person from vindication, is of all acts of injustice the greatest."

"The subject is a matter which don't concern

concern me. She has behaved ungratefully to us, and infamously to herself—and I have wholly done with her.”

“To do as we would be done by,” Madam, *I* thought was a doctrine universally received, tho’ partially practised. A moment’s reflection will make you adopt this unhappy girl’s situation—and induce you to condemn the rigour of every sentence just now uttered.”

She replied, “I should admire the force of your argument, Sir George, did the object justify any exertions in her favour.”

“Will you do me the favour to read this letter, and to hear me declare that Miss Mathews, Mrs. Goodricke, her maid, and two reputable farmers, pro-

test that Tom Watkins saw her to Mrs. Goodricke's cottage—that Louisa *never* went through Hounslow, but Wickstead—that she *never* did send any message whatever to Mr. Montague's family, but in answer to a note received, but was surprized at Tom Watkins's bringing this letter on the third day after her departure from Mr. Montague—that though she never doubted the hand, she did her senses, and sending for the groom, she asked who put that letter into his care?—he replied, “my master himself.” Mrs. Goodricke was present, and is now on her way to town to convince Mr. Montague, that Tom Watkins has deceived him with a story, false as the wretched

Louisa

Louisa is injured. She wrote a few lines in reply to the letter received, which Tom never delivered. She replied, " Could I credit the assertions of *such* people with the facility you do, Sir George, I might be tempted to encounter my father's anger, I will own I can *not*. What interest could the groom have in inventing a tale replete with charges of such a nature?"

" *That* remains to be discovered"—in walked Lucy and Charlotte. She beheld a paper in Lady Haleborough's hand, which made her unconscious of every thing else. Sir George saw her confusion—but knowing that he had some power over her nerves, he would not absolutely decide against her in his

own mind, till he tried her still further. He received the paper from Lady Haleborough, and placed it in his pocket—a dish of tea and indifferent chat restored Charlotte to ease. When Sir George thought the time was favourable for making another experiment, “Miss Charlotte,” said he, “I must relate what I have been shewing to Lady Haleborough.” He began the same circumstantial account of every particular, and gave her the letter, requesting her to read it aloud. She trembled—turned red and pale alternately—looked at the paper, and referred it to Lucy, saying, “the hand was so difficult she could not read it properly.”

“Not

"Not read your father's hand?" said Sir George who never till this instant had a thought of its being a forgery, though he believed the plot was of Charlotte's contrivance. "The hand is particularly easy."

"What has happened to you my dear?" said her sister, Lady Haleborough—"I see something has flurried you extremely, you are unwell? have something?"

"You never was more mistaken," said she—I flurried!—What should I be flurried for?

"Confirmation strong as proof of holy writ," said Sir George, pray is that in Othello?

It is, but what put that into your

head at this instant, Sir George?" asked Lucy.

"Observation, *reflection*." Charlotte spilt her tea all over her lap, and Lucy and she walked into their sister's room to undo the damage; while Sir George again brought Lady Haleborough to be merciful, and weigh the circumstances which he *knew* would lead her to her father in the course of the day.

"First, Sir George, win over Lord Haleborough to your side, and I will instantly undertake it. No man is more open to conviction than my husband; but he has got what he terms authentic instruction—God knows where!—and from whom.—I quite despair of making him hear me in vindication of her.

Charlotte

Charlotte assures me in confidence, that Louisa had tried every art to seduce the Marquis of Piercefield's affections from Lucy. Lucy will not allow this; and one would think her eyes would discover any attempt of this kind with avidity—but that attempt is like a drop to the ocean compared with other things alledged against her: I am glad you are come, my Lord," continued she; "for here is the most wonderful piece of information come to hand imaginable. I want to reap the benefits of your judgment upon it: for I quite mistrust my own. He desired her to put this in his power, and give him information."

"No;" said she, "by proxy, Sir

George will oblige me by repeating it, which he readily did.—And having finished, he waited with impatience for some remark to fall from Lord Haleborough. His wife did the same, quite distressed at his silence ; which he at length broke, very agreeably to the ear of Sir George, by proposing to go to Mr. Montague's stable, and examine Tom Watkins in an authoritative manner before they saw any of the family, and act *after* according to the intelligence they got ; this proposition met with a ready acquiescence. They immediately went forward, and came fouse upon Tom as he was rubbing down his horses, having previously agreed that Lord Haleborough should be the principal

cipal spokesman. "Tom," said his Lordship, "all is discovered."

"God forbid," said the fellow—I mean—I don't understand your Lordship."

"Why, the damned falsehoods you told of the Bell at Hounslow.—You'll swing, my man—nothing less.

"And who can prove that I told any thing of my own head?" said he. I'm ready to say over again all I told my master—and he don't desire it, or I would take my oath of it, that I would, before the best magistrate in England, take my Bible oath of all I told his honour."

"So you *shall*, Tom;—come with us to Justice Addington, and you *shall*. I don't suppose you would be such a villain

villain as to swear falsely. But we shall find some company there less scrupulous. What, said Sir George, are the whole set, Mrs. Goodricke, Miss Mathews, the maid, and the two farmers, all so abandonedly wicked?"

"God forgive me," said Tom in the greatest confusion—"I mean the people at the Justice's—I will just put on my jacket, and follow your honors." "No, no," said Sir George, "come as you are, fearful lest he should jockey them, and depart. Upon such an occasion a hackney coach shall carry us there. He bid the coachman who was in the stable call one, and enquired of the hostler where the driver of the chaise who carried Miss Mathews to Mrs. Goodricke's cottage,

cottage, lived. The man said, it was a friend of Tom Watkins's out of place, that he had now got one with a gentleman going to York—and he believed he was gone with his master." They inquired of Tom the gentleman's name, which he declared he had quite forgot.

A coach was in waiting, and with apprehension of his intending to escape, they placed him in first, and followed themselves. The man was sulky and thoughtful, which confirmed their suspicions. They reasoned with him, and told him, that if he would tell the whole truth to them and Mr. Montague, they would not carry him to Justice Addington's; but that if he persisted in falsehood, he would certainly swing. He trembled

trembled every inch, and asked where they were driving to?" Sir George replied, "Why to the Justice's". "Oh Lord! Gentlemen," answered Tom, "spare me this once, I will tell the truth, and the whole truth, to Mr. Montague, for I should fain avoid hanging till I come to years of discretion, your Honors."

They bid the coachman now drive to Cavendish-square, but Sir George had a hope that Mrs. Goodricke might be in town by this hour, and proposed calling for her at his own house, which they did without loss of time, and found the good woman waiting their return. She instantly accompanied them to Cavendish-square, after telling Tom his wickedness

wickedness would be brought to light soon, for he knew he never was at Hounslow in his way to her cottage, and that Miss Mathews and she had him into the house, and ordered Mary to give him and the driver some ale. He heard all, but was sulky. They stopped at Mr. Montague's, and as the two gentlemen were assisting the old woman to descend from a very bad step of the coach—when the culprit unobserv'd, opened the other side, jumped out, took to his heels, and though pursued by several people, was out of their power to regain.

C H A P. XIII.

IT now occurred to Sir George that it *would* be improper for him to appear before Mr. Montague; owing to the agony of his mind, and the irritability of his temper, he had used expressions at their last interview which he sincerely regretted. He begged Lord Haleborough to say as much to his father-in-law, and to procure him an opportunity for apologizing in person. He immediately went into the old gentleman's study—related from first to last, and sent for Mrs. Goodricke, who repeated
every

every thing that could throw light on this mysterious affair, in a manner so plain and concise, that not a doubt remained on the minds of either of her hearers, who were of opinion with her, that this iniquitous slander ought to be traced to its source; the infamous planners of it be exposed; and Louisa restored to the affection and friendship of the family without loss of time. Mr. Montague proposed that an advertisement offering fifty pounds reward to Tom Watkins for the discovery of the whole plot, or to any person acquainted with his hiding-place, should be immediately inserted, he disclaimed having wrote the letter to Louisa signed "Arthur Montague;" tho' the hand was so closely imitated,

ted, that his broker would certainly have paid a draft if drawn by the same person.

It was determined that Lord Haleborough and Mr. Montague should go on the following day to bring Louisa up to town; and that a letter should be instantly sent to the cottage to acquaint her with her triumph over the malicious designs of her enemies; which Mr. Montague wrote. Lord Haleborough now made Sir George Berkland's apology, and enlarged so much upon the cruel situation his mind was in at the time, that Mr. Montague quitted his study for the parlour, and held out his hand to his penitent friend. That gentleman drew up the advertisement, and
carried

carried it himself for immediate insertion ; after which they parted.

Sir George was too eager to purchase one approving smile from Louisa to let any other person be the bearer of news which would give her much satisfactory pleasure, without mentioning his intention even to Mrs. Goodricke. He ordered his own horse, and was with her at the hour she was sitting down to a poached egg for her dinner. His eyes informed her that he was the messenger of good news, and she gratefully acknowledged the obligation she owed to his indefatigable zeal in her service. A refreshment was ordered—and Sir George, with a satisfied mind, made a better meal upon cold beef and salad,

lad, than he had done for an age before. His lovely friend made him an early dish of coffee, and again assuring him that he had laid her under lasting obligation, he kissed her hand, and remounted his horse.

C H A P. XIV.

L EFT alone to her own reflections, Louisa reviewed all her past misfortunes, and appealed to her former conduct, and the uniform integrity of her heart, to enquire whether she had merited the severity of her fate. They both acquitted her.

She looked upon this fabricated message and letter as an act of such complicated cruelty and savage barbarity, that though she might regain her irreproachable character, yet she never could her peace of mind—so wantonly
and

and inhumanly destroyed. She wrote in those hours which were solitary from the absence of Mrs. Goodricke to her father, having for some days been incapable of doing so, and believing that no person had informed that excellent man of the odium she had lain under, she determined in part to preserve his paternal bosom from pangs, which she knew from a fatal experience were torture to bear. At the same time she owed it to the promise he had exacted from her at parting, to mention something about every event which concerned her; and therefore she acquainted him with the visit which she had solicited leave to make her old friend at the cottage; and that, during her absence,

sence, a misunderstanding had arisen between the Montagues and her, which had nearly proved serious; but that *they* were now convinced she had not merited any diminution of their regard; and as a proof of it, Lord Haleborough and Mr. Montague were to come on the following day to conduct her to her former abode—an abode much less pleasing since Miss Montague's marriage; but not in the least owing to any alteration in her kind protector, who condemned the conduct of his daughters, and marked his disapprobation by a new portion of attention on his part. She told him her *next* letter should convey all the particulars of the extraordinary events which had produced this unex-

pected, unlook'd-for coolness; but tho' it would contain things to astonish him relative to the Montagues—yet she earnestly entreated her father not to let either of the young men learn one single iota of the unfortunate affair. She hoped this little allusion to her future letter would prepare this fond father for what she meant; at a proper season should follow the causes which had produced the effect, not the odium she had endured. She now took up some books, among which she found one of Dr. Blair's Sermons, on the Advantages of *Resignation*; and feeling that the subject would make a deeper impression at such a moment, than perhaps at any other period of her life, she sat down to read it—the clock

clock had struck nine—the village was at rest—all was quiet—when Mary brought her a roasted potatoe for her supper, which she was beginning to eat, as three men presented themselves to her in the parlour; one of whom upon hearing her shriek crammed a handkerchief into her mouth, while the two others assisted in holding her, and carrying her into the field at the bottom of the garden, which led to the main road, and where a carriage was in waiting to receive her, she saw (notwithstanding the ruffians had tied a second handkerchief over her eyes) the unfortunate Mary was in a similar condition—with a man holding her down. Her presence of mind did not forsake her, tho' she was

unable to assist herself even with shrieks. In this situation did two companions, a man and a woman, let her continue an hour, when the handkerchief was taken from her mouth, but her hands were tied, and the one on her eyes remained. The night was dark, so that the use of her eyes would not have served her to discover the wretches who had seized on her person. She heard a horseman by the side of the carriage, and derived a degree of hope, that her distresses might penetrate the heart of some one amongst them, when she had liberty to supplicate their pity. The agony of her soul was vented in heart-rending sobs. She never spoke or reproached the monsters who accompanied

nied

nied her, but wholly absorbed in undiscrivable audible grief, which they never attempted to interrupt, travelled fifteen miles before they stopt to change horses. At the entrance of the town where they went for this purpose, the woman again placed the handkerchief in her mouth—the blinds were drawn up, and the horses ready harnessed for the occasion (which was the case all the way) were instantly put to. They again went on, and Louisa was again at liberty to indulge new bursts of sorrow, sorrow that no language can describe, rendered infinitely more acute by the hope she had indulged all the day, that her spotless fame would be restored to its former brightness; that the friend-

ship of a family (in spite of herself more dear to her as belonging to Sir George Montague) would be untarnished; and that she should continue under their roof till her father's return, thoughts which as soon as born expired. When she considered that malice had levelled its shafts at Mr. Montague's protection of her, and construed the humanity this excellent man had exerted in her behalf, to arise from a criminal attachment to her person.

When, however, exhausted nature had calmed this tumult of aggravated affliction, she threw herself on her knees in the coach, and implored them in compassion to her distracted fears to tell her where she was going, and at whose
vile

vile instigation. Her eyes were still covered, almost choaked with recapitulating her entreaties ; her head sunk on the lap of the woman ; for till *now* she did *not* know, that another female occupied a place in the coach. New attempts were made upon this discovery to create pity in the bosom of a woman abandoned to evil, to whom a tygress is gentle. Unmoved she heard all the eloquent prayers of Louisa ; and opening a basket in which was provisions, began to make a meal during this scene. At length she broke the silence she had so long observed, with advising Louisa to give over whinnying and whimpering, and eat a good supper. “ According as you behave, Miss,” said the wretch,

"you will fare, let me tell you that. I was forbid to open my lips to you, so is that gentleman; but my tender heart can't let me keep silent.—Dry up your tears, and don't make *no* more disturbance—You will thank me one of these days—never trust me, Miss, if you don't. The greatest *she* in the land won't have more gold at her command than you will—if you *knows* your own good." As Mr. Pope says, "all's for the best." The man who was eating burst out into an immoderate laugh at this quotation, but still kept silence. They again changed horses, but the same previous ceremony of the handkerchief in the unhappy girl's mouth, prevented her from awakening in any sympathising bosom an interest in her fate.

C H A P.

C H A P. XV.

AFTER these horses had gone an hour and a half, they stopped at a house, where they all alighted, and Louisa's hands were immediately freed from the cords which had bound them for the last ten hours ; the handkerchief was removed from her eyes, and she saw a woman take a seat close to her side, while a servant girl laid the cloth for breakfast. " Are you," said the mourner, " the person I came with?" " No," replied the woman, " the lady and gentleman only stopped

to take a glass of brandy, and got into the coach again." "My God," said Louisa, with her hands clasped on her eyes, "soften this woman to compassionate the afflictions of a helpless unoffending creature—on my knees I ask it," sinking down at the moment; but the person whose pity she meant to awake was callous to the sufferings of her guest. She attempted not to raise her, till she saw that a fainting fit had produced this effect. A little time restored her to a sense of exquisite pain, when she again began in a manner which would have softened the most obdurate heart, to explain her reiterated anguish, provided the hearer had not acquired an infernal callosity—by
repeated

repeated scenes of the same nature. Louisa refused tea, which was recommended to her by the maid as well as the mistress, declaring she would taste nothing whatever; but the Argus who kept her said, "if she continued in that whim till two o'clock, she would compel her to swallow whatever she chose to give her." The girl echoed, "Madam will be as good as her word."

Spent as she was by apprehension, grief, and fatigue, she had no longer strength to talk over her injuries, but her mind was still active. She beheld in idea the Montagues stop at the door of the cottage, with warm hearts, and expanded arms, to embrace her, when they would learn she had taken her

H. 6

flight.

flight. She heard them exclaim, "abandoned girl!" and recurring to the iniquitous slander they had read in the papers, they would alike conclude she was mistress of consummate hypocrisy, cast her off for ever, condemn themselves for being deluded, and expose her to the world as a wretch destitute of principle, abandoned to sin, and devoted to headlong destruction.

"Not my will, O Father, but thine!" said she, and resumed her silence. The woman led her up stairs. "Are you forbid to tell me who is the planner of this inhuman outrage?" said Louisa—"if you are *not*, oblige me. My fate may be less severe, by a knowledge of the person who has contrived it. I despair

spair of making any impression upon you. I see you are relentless—but if this is a matter of little consequence to you, I entreat you to oblige me with some account of what I am to expect.”

“ Upon express condition, Miss, that you eat a hearty dinner, and make yourself easy, I will in the afternoon tell you something about it—but if you don’t, I will lock you up, and force you to swallow, besides keep you ignorant of every thing which concerns you. You know what you have to expect. Be your own friend, you shall find *me* one. Be your own enemy, you will find I can match you.”

So saying she quitted the room, and locked the door on the outside, leaving
her

her captive to contemplate her misery till the hour of dinner arrived. Louisa bolted the door on the inside of her wretched apartment, and threw herself on the bed, overwhelmed with feelings almost too exquisite for her fragile frame to sustain. I will not attempt to describe what those who have ever laboured under unmerited calumny, will know is undescribable. Conscious approbation, the support of her ruin'd peace, preserved her for new trials, which I firmly believe she could not have lived to encounter, had self-reproach been foremost in her complicated sufferings. When Socrates received his sentence, with permission to choose a death, and command to name it,

it,

it, his wife sorely lamented his fate saying, " 'tis more cruel, because you are innocent." The reply, which Louisa felt the satisfactory force of, was delivered by Socrates with a look of mingled pity and contempt, "Woman, would you have me die *guilty*?"

C H A P. XVI.

REPEATED attempts at her door to get in were ineffectual till seven in the evening, when having committed herself and her affairs to *him* who tries, but will never desert the upright, she unbolted the door, and knocked with her heel, to let the woman know she was inclined to go down. The withdrawing the bolt had sufficiently alarmed her, and she instantly came to her prisoner, who told her she was too ill to eat of her dinner, but would now take some tea. A new tone

was

was now assumed by this beldam, who said she should instantly have it, or whatever she liked. A little negus, brandy and water, or a glass of strong mountain, would do her poor heart a world of good. She had best be persuaded to take it, for she soon did expect a person to take her under his own care, who doated upon her, and preferred her eyes to the Indies.

"Merciful father! for what is a wretch reserved?"

"For honours—and riches—and love, and for happiness, girl, if you know how to value them."

"When, when will my poignant afflictions end?"

"I expects every instant—he said he would be here by fix."

"Who

“ Who? Oh, if you *are* a woman! If you are *not* a monster, preserve me from destruction—on my knees I ask you—preserve me from destruction—I have no mother—my father is abroad—I am bereft of friends—I yet have money—make your own terms—If my father’s labours, united with mine, have amassed enough to purchase your pity, it is yours—name but your terms—Oh, were you but a mother! my tears would force their way to your heart.”

“ Mother indeed! I hope I have not lived to these days without bringing up a family—yes, and gave them the best of *eductions* too—French and dancing—a boarding-school *eduction*. My daughters are well off in the world.

The

The eldest rides in a coach, as good as her own, and the youngest, a pock-fret, pretty smart little body, as you shall clap your eyes on, is prentice to a millener, who gives her the best of characters."

"Name but the price of my liberty," said Louisa, "perhaps I am worth it, but if not, my father is; he will thankfully give it the being who preserved his unhappy child from violation."

"Keep your breath for a better purpose, child. I know you are without friends, and who that has money is that? Money and charity, as the saying is, cover a multitude of faults. If you have cash, you may bid reputation defiance. Quit your husband, and marry your gallant—the outrageously virtuous

virtuous world will visit you, and defend you. Don't make no parade and parlarver about virtue and such old-fashioned cant. I am quite sick of the name on't—I hears them—yes, it is the doating man."

Utterance was denied to the victim, whose arm the woman held. She tore herself from her grasp, and in distraction paced the room with hurried steps, threw herself into a chair, and instantly darted to the window, tearing herself from the wretch, who again sought to hold her, with a force adequate to her injuries. The door unlocked—a shriek from Louisa greeted two men who entered the parlour—one a very genteel man, of about five and twenty—the other

other a little dark man, excessively like a Jew. They spoke for some minutes to the woman, enquired how Louisa had been, what refreshment she had taken, and whether she had had any rest.

"Rest;" said she, fixing her eyes upon the speaker—"there is no rest for me;"—and fortunately for her, a flood of tears gave her a momentary relief.

"Tell me, I conjure you, tell me, my destined fate, that I may arm my mind to support trials of a nature so exquisitely severe—for what am I reserved?"

"For love and happiness, adorable creature," said the first man, "I have long seen and regarded you, but could not raise your attention to notice me. I
detested.

detested the Montagues, and disdained even to purchase your love under their roof. I am an unmarried man, yet feared that you would from squeamish notions about religion, reject my suit; yet to obtain you was so necessary to my peace, that I planned this step three months ago; but I could not execute it."

Convulsions had seized her before the speech was ended—every thing was administered—and they were not of very long duration; but they feared that an attempt to remove her that night would make them return, and therefore determined to sleep there. The house was upwards of a quarter of a mile distant from any other. The carriage which brought them was dismissed, and Louisa was compelled to eat an egg, as they protested

protested unless she did so voluntarily, they would hold her while they poured sustenance down her throat ;—a protestation repeated fifty times by the villain who pretended to love her, and who persecuted her with declaring a passion for her which she never deigned to reply to.

When she was conducted to the room which she had occupied for so many hours, she again bolted the door, which her keeper had locked, and placing herself in a chair against it, sat there during the long night, except when she threw herself into a posture of supplication. Her own woes now gave place to her loved parent's. " He will die, too," said she—" he can never stand *this*—fortitude

—fortitude cannot stand *such* trials neither.”

When a distant gleam of light from the East entered her window, she advanced to the casement to see whether it was possible to get between the bars, but they were so narrow, the round part of her arm was bruised in the attempt. She exerted all her strength to remove the middle one—it was fast—and she saw how utterly impossible it was to effect an escape—She was too much exhausted for tears. Throwing herself on the feet of the bed, she patiently resigned herself to God’s will. For two hours did she remain fixed in her seat, when her door had the key put into it, and she received from the
voice

voice of the woman in order to unbolt it; she did so, and a breakfast of coffee and tea was set on the chair; for the room was too wretchedly furnished to have a table, when she saw that the bed had never been lain in, she abused her in coarse terms for not sleeping on it—sure it was good enough—daintier ladies than she had slept there before her, without turning up their noses at her furniture;—but pride and poverty always went together. Hearing, however, the steps of a man upon the stairs, the wretch quickly changed her voice.—“God forgive me,” said she, “I am so hasty—don’t take no offence, Miss—but I’m apt to be too hot—I ask your pardon.” The total indifference of Louisa to either her insults or her excuses, was interrupted by

the tall man who came to enquire what was the matter, and to advise her to keep up her spirits, for he was her friend—besought her to take a good breakfast, as they had a very long journey to go, and they did not mean to stop on the road.

“ Leave me—I only beseech you to leave me; you cannot torment me long.”

When a few tears relieved a heart so cruelly over-charged with afflictions—they left her—and she then took some little refreshment, which she indeed stood in need of; but as she was doing so, a carriage drove up to the gate.—She turned her affrighted eyes, and saw a very elegant green post coach without any arms. and two pair of hired horses, with one servant on horseback. A

universal

universal tremor took possession of her —she sunk on the chair—and, almost lifeless, leaned against the casement. The woman equipped her with a bonnet of her own, and a cloak of her maid's for the journey; and, previously guarding against any screams, placed her in the coach with the two men, and they drove off with velocity.

C H A P. XVII.

LOUISA apparently seemed in a state of perfect satisfaction. As soon as she was out of the village she was released from the handkerchief in her mouth, of which she had, however, scarcely been sensible. The motion of the carriage too soon aroused her from her lethargy; and after collecting herself as well as she was able, she broke silence, with requesting the two men to hear what she had to say, while she had strength to speak, without interruption. The little Jewish-looking
man

man replied, "that if it was an attempt to make them milk-hearted, she employed her time in vain, and they wished to be spared it."

"Sir," said she, "you must hear me. Whatever intentions are *yours*, *mine* are to defend myself to the last moment of my existence. My father will pursue you, and, by an appeal to the laws, revenge the injuries his unhappy child received. I have friends sworn to defend me from the malice of my enemies; and tho' you may escape punishment for a little while, it will assuredly overtake you at last. It is yet in your power to allude vengeance by setting me free, and resigning me to my wayward destiny.—I will never be evidence against you."

"My charmer forgets," said the tall one, "that love has produced the *risques* I *have* run; and that *love* will exert his powerful influence to make me detain her for ever. You are, angel creature, my property—obtained with danger, and (were the improbable attempt made,) defended with valour. Death alone should make me relinquish the paragon of beauty," taking hold of her hand—which passion, at his violence, made her wrench from his unhallowed grasp. Despair was indeed the inmate of her unfortunate bosom. She exhibited a face of the most total despondency, and travelled on near seventy miles in the course of that day, without an attempt at speech. Their provisions were with them, of which she refused to eat; but
at

at length the man who profaned the name of love with professing himself its votary, promised her, that if she would eat, the handkerchief should not be crammed in her mouth for the remainder of the evening, as there was no chance of meeting any travellers upon the road at that hour. She then took a biscuit, and secretly put up her fervent prayers to heaven, that it would direct some party to her assistance, as she would make an effort for deliverance by screams.

It was now nine o'clock, and the men informed her half an hour would for that night complete their journey, when, suddenly turning a road, they met three horsemen preceding a carriage. The companions of Louisa put down their

glass, which was already done on her side of the coach, to see what was the matter—when she screamed out vehemently, “murder! help! murder!”—The horsemen stopt the carriage, and then a terrible clashing of sticks, and then firing of pistols, produced a total annihilation of Louisa’s faculties, till such time as she found herself sitting in a post-chaise—and heard a voice beside her in a stifled groan—it was not one she had lately heard—but yet it was not new to her—“for mercy’s sake,” said she, “where am I!—what is the matter!—can any new horror await me!—Speak!”——

“If I have protected a woman in distress,” answered a feeble voice, “I shall

shall not regret the loss of my life now ebbing to its close."

" Protected!—am I safe then? My God! my God! I thank thee—I now recollect the firing—You are wounded, I fear. Whoever you are, may every blessing attend you—my gratitude wants words."

" Do those requiems come from the lips of my adored Louisa! Am I thus blest in the moment of death!"

" Gracious Father!" in a shudder, uttered Louisa, " Lord Bellhammond!"

" Your deliverer, angel Louisa. I heard from Montague of the surprize he and Lord Haleborough met with at hearing of your flight. Too much, too warmly interested about whatever concerns my charming adored Louisa, I set

out for Mrs. Goodricke's, where Mary gave me the whole horrid account of the transaction. I lost no time, though near twenty hours had already elapsed, to pursue you; and if necessary lose my life in your service. I traced an account from village to village, till I got into Wales."

"Into Wales!" exclaimed she with horror.

"Yes, into Wales; where for the last thirty miles I lost all knowledge of the route your companions had taken. Just at my own estate I determined to enquire after my wife, who lies at the point of death, I am told by an express sent up to London, and resume my search after the most lovely of her sex.—I verily believe I have got my death's wound

wound—but it is a matter of pleasure, not pain, since I have rendered you a service.”

It required little penetration to discover that the whole, from first to last, was a plot and contrivance of the man, who pretended to have rescued her, when in fact the two wretches were his hired mercenary emissaries. A glow of indignation rose in her breast; but she wisely suppressed it. She saw herself in his power, and she feared to exasperate a monster, who had already portrayed the extreme badness of his heart. She was silent till they arrived at the magnificent seat which belonged to so unworthy an owner. A thousand ideas rushed on her mind. She had seen no cottage, no miserable inn, even in the

way, to beseech him to set her down at. To shew a *distrust* of him, before escape was in her power, was to provoke his vigilance to guard her: detesting deceit, she could not adopt what policy would have recommended, a specious acknowledgment of the favour he had rendered her, but she tried not to express her sense of his schemes, or her detection of his villainy. I may, thought she, be able to win over a servant with bribes to assist me in flying from this monster, for she could not for a moment credit the assertion that Lady Bellhammond was in the house, tho' she heard him enquire of the porter at the lodge whether his Lady was better? and gave orders for a surgeon to be sent for immediately. New hopes inspired her

her that she should make some friend—his wounds preserved her from immediate fears, and encouraged her with energy to demand an immediate release, which he refused.

“ For what purpose detain me, Lord Bellhammond?—I *must*, I *will* go. I will *not* continue under this roof.” He urged her to patience, begged her in the most soothing manner to take some refreshment, as it should wait upon her in her own apartment.—“ I am,” said he, “ under the necessity of keeping my bed, I fear, for a length of time; and was I not, Lady Bellhammond is on her death-bed, I am thoroughly convinced, which has made her seek this reconciliation, and consequently my time would be engrossed. Command every thing
under

under my roof, and endeavour to regain your health and composure. Write to your friends—tell them where you are, and they will doubtless come for you.”

“ Oh, no, no, no,” said Louisa, “ not for millions would I wish my friends to know that I am under your hated roof, till I can tell them every distracting circumstance which has conspired to bring me here—only let me instantly depart. All I ask, entreat, and implore, is to be suffered to depart—every moment is an age while I appear guilty to my friends—*friends* did I say!—My God! have I any?—they abandon me to appearances—they conclude me lost to every principle of virtue and honour.”

“ Knowing

“ Knowing you, Miss Mathews, as intimately as the Montagues do,” said his Lordship, “ these are idle suggestions. If they *can* believe any thing unworthy of you, they are not worth a momentary regret. Friendship that flies at an ill-natured rumour, is not worth preserving. My friendship will never desert you—always protect you.”

“ Lord Bellhammond, you tell me *chance* has preserved my life—let *design* preserve my fame, the only thing to make that life tolerable to its unwilling possessor. Let me depart. As you look for happiness here or hereafter, suffer me to set forward immediately.”

“ In the dangerous situation I am in from my wounds, Louisa, it is cruel to the utmost degree to agitate me thus
inhumanly

inhumanly with your tears, every one of which force a thousand corresponding drops of blood from my heart."

"Could you, Lord Bellhammond, but view the agony of *mine* at this moment, you would in some degree mitigate its unspeakable anguish, by suffering me to depart."

A violent groan from the Peer, whose hands at the same instant were clasped upon his forehead, for a moment suspended her own cares. She thought him expiring. "My God! protect me," she exclaimed as she ran forward to pull the bell, which the unexpected agility of Lord Bellhammond prevented her doing. He seized her hand as she touched it, wishing his servants to continue

tinue ignorant of his art, or Louisa's reluctance. "I am better," said he in a tumultuous voice—"your ringing would have alarmed Lady Bellhammond—I am much better—be composed, my lovely and beloved Louisa—be confident that you are with a friend who will never desert you, who will glory in proving his unchanging affection for you."

"For mercy's sake, Lord Bellhammond, do not pollute my ears with language I detest."

"My life shall be devoted to procure you every happiness the world has to bestow."

"Impossible!—inhuman man, impossible!—every circumstance which reminds me that you ever took an interest

terest in my fate will embitter my existence. I am too, too wretched—lost in the estimation of my friends—blasted in my character—deprived of the power of vindication—I have only conscious innocence to support me. Oh my God! enable me to defeat the malice of my enemies, by making my conduct clear to the whole world, and then, in thy mercy, take me hence, for life is an insupportable burthen.”

“ For mercy’s sake, my angel love, do not thus agitate yourself and me.”

“ Then I entreat you, let me go—let me depart directly—there must be many stages which go at least part of the way. If you are my friend, *now* prove it.”

“ Any thing else, Louisa. Let your friends

friends first know where you are, I beseech you—they will doubtless come for you: in the mean time, compose yourself.”

“ Impossible! composure in my situation! impossible!”

“ How unreasonable you can be, Miss Mathews! Have I not rescued you at the very hazard of my life? and yet you are not only unthankful for it, but unfeeling to the greatest degree. You entertain suspicions about my honour. Take the consequences of your want of confidence, Madam. I am excessively injured. I repeat, write to your friends—let the Montagues determine your future destination. You know that you may be happy with a man who would gladly lay down his life to serve you.

Have

Have I not loved you with an unexampled constancy, which has revived your scorn and cruelty? A grateful return from you will be a virtue, not a weakness."

"Infamous suggestion! Surely I am an object of your implacable hatred, that you thus delight in destroying my peace of mind without the least remorse." A shower of tears gave some relief to her overcharged heart, when Lord Bellhammond, in a manner he conceived to be soothing, re-desired her to compose herself, write to her friends, and abide by their determination, for he well knew that every thing relative to Louisa wore such unfavourable appearances, that the Montagues would never reply to her letters,

letters, and that after the conviction that she was condemned unheard, she would accommodate her mind to receive the unwearied attentions he would assail her with at the moment she found herself deserted by the world. He lamented that she had unnecessarily exhausted her strength—repeated the danger he imagined himself to be in, and hoped that a night of uninterrupted rest would restore the most beloved of women to health and peace.

With a look which almost uttered an eloquent negative to this speech, she took her candle, and wishing his Lordship not to deceive either himself or her, she quitted the room. A maid servant had for some minutes been waiting in the hall, who conducted her
to

to the apartment Lord Bellhammond had long designed Miss Mathews should occupy, if he should ever prevail upon her to place herself under his protection.

C H A P. XVIII.

LOUISA saw all the hidden wheels which set this machine in motion, in an instant. She made no reply, but wishing the surgeon would soon arrive, she made him a slight curtsy, and followed a maid, who carried her the candle. She was now conducted to a very elegant room, hung round with pale blue silk, the bed and other furniture of the same, where there was an excellent fire, and tea things already placed for her to have it without delay. She dismissed the woman with saying she would ring for her in half an

P.

an hour, for she wished to apply to her own thoughts for consolation and advice. She bolted the door, and flinging herself on her knees, she entreated God to deliver her from the vile machinations of her bitter enemy, and to grant her a collected mind in every danger. It now occurred to her, that she must converse with the maid, to get some information of her nature, was she tender-hearted—she had sufficient cash in her pocket to bribe her highly—her watch, and some trifling trinkets, when an idea arose that a few lines to the surgeon, entreating him to peruse a letter she would have ready written for him at his next visit to Lord Bellhammond, might have the desired effect, if he happened to be a
man

man of honour or humanity. She looked round the chamber for pen and ink, but there was none. She rang the bell, and enquired whether the surgeon was not arrived, and learnt from the woman that Lord Bellhammond had counteracted the orders. Her courage forsook her, he had some infamous reason for wishing her to believe he was dangerously wounded: her scheme of writing to the surgeon was at an end.—She asked particulars about Lady Bellhammond, which, however the maid did not answer with the same ease as she did the other question—she hesitated and contradicted herself. Louisa did not appear to remark it, she felt herself extremely ill; and she feared least the agitation she had undergone for so many

days should end in death, before she had cleared her fame. The fever that was now upon her, made her have these ideas, which a little while proved to be well-founded. She grew worse and worse every instant, she then told the maid that she looked humane, and encouraged her to place a confidence in her, begged for pen, ink, and paper unknown to Lord Bellhammond. "Here is a guinea," said she, "to secure your good offices; when I have wrote a few lines I will explain myself to you." The maid sat down at Louisa's order, at the further end of the room.

Louisa wrote several scraps — tore them; again wrote, and did the same; she already wandered—"You had best

go

go to bed," said the woman, "Madam, write to-morrow."

"No, no!" said she, "perhaps I can't write *then*. Will you tell my father that I am not guilty—he *will* think I am guilty. Tell him Louisa died innocent—don't tell Lord Bellhammond I am ill—detested wretch, he would come to see me—Oh! how—how I despise him in my soul."

The maid tried anew to persuade her to go to bed.—"I won't tell master nothing," said the woman, "about what you says, Mam, if you will undress and go to bed." She offered to assist her, met with no resistance, and placed her in bed, then gathering up the scattered fragments of writing, she read:

"Lady Haleborough, Louisa Ma-

thews was innocent, Lord Bellhammond—the infernal Lord Bellhammond—employed monsters to carry me off from Mrs. Goodricke's, and pretended a sham fight and rescue, to get me in his own infamous power.”—Another was, “Mr. Montague, tell my father that his child broke her heart—No, that will hurt him, say only she was unhappy—had enemies, and she died.—No, don't say any thing.”—A third. “Sir, George Berkland, I trust I shall escape from this evil world before Lord Bellhammond, the vilest of human creatures shall have put his execrable plans in execution—don't risque your life against a villain's—but I must write to my father.”

“Yes, my father, to you—No, you believe

believe me to be infamous" — Mr. George Montague—*et tu brute?*—I see it, I see it. Yes, even so."

Several others of the same nature were torn to atoms, she, however gathered them up, and placing them in her pocket, went down to the house-keeper, beckoned her up, and re-entered the room. The girl was her daughter, she told her of the pretext, and that the Lady was beside herself she was sure—the woman felt Louisa's head, and found her in a scorching fever; she knew nothing of the letters she attempted to write, but went to her master, who was making a hearty meal in his own study, and rolling up bandages for the calf of an unhurt leg, against the morning. She acquainted him that

the Lady was very ill, he went up with her, drew towards the bedside and felt her pulse.

“ Good God !” said he as he felt it, his voice aroused Louisa—she screamed—“ Wretch, hated detested wretch, quit my room—leave me,” and continuing her screams obliged him to depart. He believed *now* that he had carried matters too far, that she was in imminent danger; and tho’ it was now half past twelve, he sent seven miles for an apothecary: it was five in the morning before the man arrived, and the opinion he gave of his unfortunate patient was too bad to be received with fortitude by Lord Bellhammond—He stormed—swore, that the apothecary’s life should pay the forfeit if he did not restore

restore his adored Louisa; that if she recovered he would give him a note of fifty pounds, but as the man believed him frantic in the first part of his speech he had little hope (did the unfavourable symptoms give place to better) that he would recollect his offer, but he providentially beckoned in two servants to be witnesses of it.

C H A P. XIX.

WHILE she lay in this dangerous situation, Lord Bellhammond revolved in his own guilty mind the whole transaction; and believing that it could not be hid from the world, he anticipated the disgrace he should experience if her death ensued: an event he indeed dreaded. He determined in this case to go abroad at the instant; but if the disorder took a favourable turn, to go back to town, where he had continued a whole day after Louisa's elopement (as it was termed) was known to the public, for
the

the noble Peer had *himself* been the harbinger of Louisa's disgrace, and given birth to the report, that the world believed he was the man she had selected for her Cicerbo. Even Sir George Berkland never suspected that Lord Bellhammond was guilty. The person he attached his suspicions to, was Sir William Archer, till Mr. Arran solemnly swore he dined with him at Calais on the *very* day that Louisa went off. Mrs. Goodricke (that real friend who never let suspicion of this estimable girl rest on her mind for an instant) reprobated every idea of *elopement*; but supposed that some bad man had taken advantage of the former evil reports in the newspapers, and thinking her *fair game*, as the licentious

papers had called her, had watched her motions, and finding her unprotected had carried her off by force. While Mr. Montague, who had conceived the most unfavourable impressions of her conduct, from her flight at the hour he went for her, felt particularly engrossed by an expression of Charlotte's at the first information she had received of—" I hope she an't gone with Tom Watkins." Mr. Montague was extremely distressed at the whole affair—grieved at his heart for poor Mathews whom he had recalled, and forbid any further insertion of the advertisement to apprehend Tom Watkins.

Sir George was too anxious to clear up the mysteries which were so thickly spread before him, unable to join in society

ciety he returned with Mrs. Goodricke to her cottage through Wickstead, where he found himself so ill that he was under the necessity of laying down for a couple of hours. The good woman wished the apothecary to see him as a very thick rash had appeared in his face. Unknown to Sir George she stepped out to Mr. Buckingham's shop, and while she was speaking, a woman came in, and said, "her husband was gone up to town to get the reward. A man of the name of Tom Watkins had been apprehended." "Mercy! good woman," said Mrs. Goodricke, "when and where?" "Why, ma'm, he has been hid in a cock-loft for this week past, and got a fore throat, which was so bad he thought he was done for. He sent

for the priest, for Tom is a Roman Catholic ;” and there he said, “ as how he had ruined a Lady, and could not die in peace if he did not perjest, as how he had been instigated to tell a pack of lies by his mistress, a Lady in London, who gave him five guineas never to own she did so.”

Mr. Buckingham seemed to think the woman was wrong in the name, as another had been mentioned. The woman replied, “ the man, Sir, has taken an *affidaved* ; and my husband saddled Trop, and is gone to London to get the reward.” “ The man will not recover, I believe, said Mr. Buckingham, his throat is in a shocking way.”

Mrs. Goodricke told the apothecary the interest she took in his discovery,
and

and returned to Sir George, who accompanied her to the lodging this worthless man was confined in. He, here, before the priest, who had urged him to a confession of all his crimes, declared, that Miss Charlotte Montague had *bid* him give the Hounslow account to her father, and afterwards carry the letter from Mr. Montague to the cottage, for which she gave him three guineas; and when Sir George Berkland made his visit at Richmond to enquire about Louisa, and set matters to rights, she came to the stable door, told him, that if he was examined, she begged him not to mind threats—there was two guineas more, and she would give him more in a few days. That when Lord Haleborough told him he

would

would swing, he meant to have confessed *all*; but, that thinking his mistress would bear him harmless, he took time, and when he saw opportunity to escape he went off, as Miss Charlotte Montague was obliged in honour to maintain him, and he meant never to let her rest when he wanted money, for she had put it into his power to threaten her with a discovery.

All this, however interesting, did not throw any light upon the sudden disappearance of Louisa, tho' it created suspicion that the same person had employed other people to carry her out of the way. Sir George bid Tom relate what happened to him after absconding, in the hope that the relation might afford a clue to their further search. He
examined

examined the man himself, who told him that he had very lately obliged a friend by recommending him to Lord Bellhammond's groom as a stable-boy; and that as he was gone to this place, he thought he would hide himself in the same neighbourhood, as the man might be kind to him; that walking thro' the village of Martlet, he saw him riding from market, and enquired whether he was going home; his answer was, not till he had called at mother Goodricke's, as his Lord had bid him leave a parcel there. "You won't find her," says I, "if you do go—I saw her with my own eyes at Mr. Montague's house in town this blessed day, so tell your master—but don't name *me*, for I have run away through bad usage. As to knowing
any

any thing further, I do not.—God forgive me, I truly repent my heinous sin.”

“ Now I have it,” said Sir George, “ Lord Bellhammond had his information from the stable-boy—and perhaps Louisa has ere this been the victim to the licentious villain.—There is madness in the supposition.—God of heaven! defend her from his arts and outrages.”

“ You are certainly wrong, Sir George,” said Mrs. Goodricke; “ Lord Bellhammond was in town long *after* this shocking outrage had been committed.—Be cautious what you say, but let us plan something.”

“ I am determined,” said he, “ to follow him to Bellhammond Park in a post-chaise and four; and if she *is* there,

to

to deliver her, or lose my life in the attempt. I mean to have one immediately from this house; and if Mr. Buckingham can recommend a person of spirit to accompany me, so much the better. My servant is an enterprising fellow. I shall, as you advise, act with caution. Mr. Buckingham's brother, an attorney, was with him on a visit, and accepted the seat in the chaise, while the apothecary unscrewed a neat pair of pocket pistols for the adventure, and added half a dozen shirts to the four Sir George's portmanteau contained. The Baronet drew on his banker for fifty pounds, which the landlord of the inn discounted, and offered Mr. Buckingham a note for fifteen more, who gave him the cash, which was instantly

stantly placed in Mrs. Goodricke's hands to return to town, with orders to carry on the affair about Tom Watkins, but in every thing to consult Lord Haleborough; and not even to give this account in the Countess's presence, as the share her sister Miss Charlotte Montague bore in the disgrace might affect her too deeply, unless it was broken to her by degrees."

C H A P. XX.

MRS. Goodricke returned directly to town, and the lover inspired with new hopes that he should not only preserve the lovely woman to peace (now doubly dear from the unmerited sufferings she had undergone,) but also create a tenderness in her breast for the person who had so unweariedly pursued her, with the view of preserving her from dishonour, set forward on his expedition with an alacrity lovers alone can have any idea of. They travelled post day and night, till they reached Lord Bellhammond's domains, when, seeing

seeing a gentleman ride from the house down the avenue, Sir George Berkland thought it advisable to stop till he had passed, and try whether he could gain any intelligence of Louisa from this stranger previous to his going up to the house; in ten minute's time the man who had leisurely walked his horse passed the lodge, and Sir George alighting from the chaise, addressed him with an inquiry whether Lady Bellhammond was yet alive? "I am told," said he, "that the earl received an express from Wales, that she lay on her death-bed, is that true?"

"Lady Bellhammond," said the stranger, "is at a farm about fifty miles distant from this, and I believe is in perfect health.—You seem extremely interested

interested in my intelligence," said the man ; " I do give you my word, that Lady Bellhammond is not ill. My attendance here is on a young lady ; for I fee, Sir, you know my profession by your enquiries."

" Pray, Sir, will you tell me the young lady's name ?"

" She is neice, I am told, to my Lord ; I only know her Christian name is Louisa."

" It is—It is my Louisa ! May every righteous power join me in vindicating the rights of innocence.—Villain ! double villain !"

" Sir, you amaze me ; but I must warn you of the young lady's situation. She has till this day been in the most extreme danger ; and a little thing, I
fear,

fear, would produce a relapse. You best know what superior right you have over her, but I beg to be excused from becoming a party in the affair. Lord Bellhammond is a very powerful nobleman, and except when a lady is in the question, a very honourable gentleman."

"Far," said Sir George, "far be it from me, Sir, to try to corrupt your integrity; your high notions of honour—

"As a friend to humanity, peace, and good neighbourhood," said the doctor, "*I* would recommend gentle methods. Ask the Earl to restore the lady in a civil way; and if he hums and haws, and won't oblige you, begin an action against him for detaining
your

your property—and all will be well again. *Prove* an injury, and the law will give you swinging damages.”

“ Whose post-chaise is that drawn up at the gate ?” said Sir George.

“ The Earl’s; he is going off for London directly, and means to travel all night. He has some place at court that compels him to residence.”

“ Villain!—infamous villain!”—He returned to his chaise, and told them there was no time to be lost; he then desired Mr. Buckingham to go forward, and even if Lord Bellhammond was in his carriage, to stop him, and deliver a message, that Sir George Berkland called him a coward and a villain, and was ready to give him instant satisfaction

tion at the oak trees by the Lodge, where he now waited his arrival.

The transport of passion he was in prevented him from seeing that such precipitancy would defeat its own purpose. Mr. Buckingham replied, "You had best render the lady a service *first*. What will become of her should you fall, he would carry her off with him, reside on the continent, and she would never be restored to her friends."

"Pardon me, Sir," said the manservant, but as my Lord is going to town directly, you had best wait till he is gone; rescue the lady, and when you have given her back to her friends, take vengeance on him."

"That, Sir, is *your* phlegmatic opinion;—

nion ;—the infernal monster or I have seen our last morning.”

Mr. Buckingham intreated him to consider the Doctor's information, that he dreaded Miss Louisa's relapse. “ For God's sake, Sir, be not so rash, you will ruin all if you are. Only consider five minutes.” While they reasoned, they saw the carriage with the Earl in it, with four hired horses, and only his own servant who accompanied him in the chaise, set off for London, and take another direction than the Lodge for quitting Bellhammond Park.

Sir George now ordered the chaise up to the house, and with one pistol in his own pocket, and a second in Mr. Buckingham's, they ascended the grand flight of steps which opened into the

drawing-room; a house-maid was dusting the room, whom Sir George immediately made easy at the sight of strangers, by enquiring after his dear Louisa. "Lord, Sir!" said she, "I am certain you're her brother—the poor lady will be rejoiced to see you, for she's been very bad; and master didn't leave no orders about her seeing no one." "Well," said Sir George, "here is a guinea, if you will carry her a few lines, and return here to us without telling your fellow-servants at present. You shall have a second before I go, if you manage well"—He then wrote,

"I have discovered my most dear Louisa—Am now in the house to release

leave her—and restore her to *her friends*.

—If she still wishes to quit the affectionate protection of him, who would glory in being permitted to have a legal claim to it.—I wait your orders.—Your villain is gone to town.”

“GEORGE BERKLAND.”

C H A P. XXI.

A FULL hour did he wait in agonizing suspense, when the girl returned, with saying, "Louisa would see him in ten minutes; but she has fainted so often since I carried your note, Sir, that my mother feared it was all over with her. Mother was by, and says she will speak with you presently."

The mother did come at that moment, and told Sir George, that he must instantly depart the house, for her master had given positive orders to deny Louisa, if any body did come; but that they felt so secure that no creature would

would inquire after her; that they judged it better not to speak to the common servants, as they knew it would create a suspicion about some nonsense or other.—Sir George Berkland told her, that if she lost her master's protection, she should find *his* if she would attend Louisa; whatever wages she now had, he would add ten guineas to it, and get her a place in London; but that whether she assented or no, he was determined to take Louisa away, and that pistol and Mr. Buckingham's should carry his plans into execution, was there any resistance. After many remonstrances, the woman was compelled to agree to their proposals. Louisa's bell now rang. Sir George whispered his man to watch the housekeeper's mo-

tions, and to get into her good graces. They followed her into Louisa's chamber—what a meeting! Louisa, the lovely Louisa, pale, emaciated, supported in her bed with pillows, held out her hand to Sir George, who was almost unable to meet it, his tottering knees would scarcely bear him to the chair placed for him; the powers of speech were denied him—cold drops stood on his face—and almost lifeless, they poured a glass of Madeira by degrees down his throat. Mr. Buckingham thought he had best bleed him immediately, for the trial was beyond his strength. The object of his ardent gaze was so changed—so altered a being—that he thought he beheld her for the last time. They closed the curtains of
of

of her bed, and her friend was immediately bled. He instantly felt relieved, and the extreme perturbation subsided in a calm shower of tears—tears which were mutual. He now told her, her dangers were over; that he would defend her with his life; and that the instant she was able to be moved, he would convey her to her friends.”

“ Oh, let it be at this instant, then,” replied Louisa, whose joy suffused her pale cheek with a momentary crimson; “ lose no time—your life is endangered by every moment’s delay.”

“ Too pleasing belief!—Is Louisa’s concern for *me* awakened? You are not in a condition, my amiable love, to travel just now.—To-morrow, perhaps, you will amend.”

L 4

“ Not

“ Not within the walls of Lord Bellhammond’s house, be assured.—Tho’ since I have been compelled to enter it he has ceased to insult me with his odious detested passion. My illness, which was the consequence of my situation, has, in that respect, been a blessed circumstance. I am quite ready to depart; for pity’s sake let us be gone. I am almost able to walk it, I am so much better, since I see that my ardent prayer to heaven has been granted.”

“ Buckingham is in some degree a medical man—If *he* thinks you can move without danger, we will begin at four o’clock to set forward; at night rest at Carmarthen, and by gentle degrees pursue our journey. I will go
write

write to Lord Haleborough (who is the warmest friend in the world) while our dinner is preparing, for my companions are not lovers, and therefore require more substantial diet than air to live on. In truth, I perceive myself to be growing a mere man again by my hunger. I have engaged this kind-hearted woman to attend you, and will send back the post-chaise with my servant in it to the next town for a coach—and name four o'clock for the hour: so my good Mrs. Evans, pack up your things; there is five guineas earnest of my serving you kindly.—Lose no time—pack up Louisa's also."

"Mrs. Evans," replied Louisa, "has supplied me ever since I came, for the monsters never gave me time to put on

a bonnet or a cloak. I long to hear how you discovered a villainy so artfully managed; and I doubt not you feel the same impatience. I have reason to be thankful for your exalted friendship and humanity, Sir George; valuable as they are, they are a weight upon my heart."

"Avoid this too interesting topic, my dearest life for the present; endeavour to recover the tumult this hope of escape has occasioned, and I will dispatch my letters. No time was lost—as soon as they had refreshed themselves, the carriage was at the door, in which were three pillows from the inn to support the invalid, whose spirits were too much elated for her feeble frame. They carried with them what was necessary

for

for her to swallow upon the road, and quitted a dwelling with pleasure, whose owner perverted the blessings of riches to *distress*, instead of *protecting* the friendless and innocent; who in the eye of humanity have *such* powerful claims on the heart.

C H A P. XXII.

LOUISA's mind was so comparatively at ease, that she recovered astonishingly, and was able to accomplish the journey to London in the space of three days. She acquainted Sir George with her father's having formerly lodged at Mrs. Wiatt's, and her wish to stay there for a little time, till she could attempt to throw herself in Mr. Montague's way, and force conviction on his senses.—“ If there can be any extenuation of Charlotte Montague's conduct, furnish me with it,” said she ; “ for I grieve at the concern
her

her poor father must feel at the discovery of her baseness. The surest way to obtain *your* affection (which has been evidently her object) was to be fond of the woman you honoured with your preference. The only consolation I have received of value, is the ignorance my dear father is in of my situation. Had I acquainted him with my griefs, the idea of *his* affliction would have rendered *my* life quite insupportable. This additional pang would have made the burthen intolerable." She varied her countenance so much during this conversation, and dwelt upon it so long, that Sir George kept back the knowledge he had of Mr. Mathews being summoned to England (upon the extraordinary message

Tom

Tom Watkins invented from Hounslow) lest it should affect her too deeply.

When they arrived in town they drove to Dean-street, Soho, and found Mrs. Wiatt had her rooms disengaged for a week. Here was Louisa deposited by Sir George, who, after giving orders what she should have, left her to the good woman's care, and with Mr. Buckingham sat off for Lord Haleborough's, who had received his letter from Bellhammond Park, and impatiently waited his arrival. "The *jeuvenille* Peer," said his Lordship, "feels secure he has baffled suspicion, for on the night he arrived (which was at a late hour) he immediately dressed, and went to Cavendish-square, where the Montagues

Montagues were surprized to see him, as he had formerly said his wife was dying) but he replied, that he had got pretty far on his solitary way, when he met one of his tenants coming to town, with an account that she was entirely out of danger—'so,' added he, 'our interview is protracted, for this event alone will induce me to see her again.' He was then informed by Lucy (for Miss Charlotte was at Richmond) that they had got no intelligence of Louisa—that Tom Watkins had confessed a most inhuman plot against her—*what* she did not know, but in consequence of it Lord Haleborough, her father, and Charlotte, went directly to Richmond, as Mr. Montague said, 'to confront a bad woman with her accuser.' 'I can't for the life of me think who the bad

bad woman is, and I find it is a secret from Lady Haleborough and me; but I hope she'll be punished for her wickedness."

As Lord Bellhammond had had no hand in the plot Charlotte Montague had laid, to separate Miss Mathews from the family, he was anxious to know the particulars. That *great man* never had an idea of carrying off Louisa while she was under his friend Mr. Montague's roof. If he could have seduced her indeed—that was another thing—but to run away with her from his friend, would have been a breach of honour the noble Lord would have reprobated. When he first heard the message from Hounslow, "*that she had chosen other protection than Mr. Montague's,*" he was convinced that it was
not

not an *improper one*, as he firmly believed she was innately virtuous; but hoping that time would reconcile her to the man whose love made him rash at the instant, he planned the seizing upon her at Mrs. Goodricke's, yet wisely contrived to employ two trusty friends, who were to assume the characters he assigned them—of lover and servant. The *lover* however acted his part so ill, that Louisa never believed that he had *ever* seen her before, and during the capture, Lord Bellhammond took care to be visible in every part of the town, to prevent any suspicion from resting at his door, though from the moment of her quitting Cavendish-square he had assiduously sent paragraphs to the papers, affirming himself

self to be the happy man Louisa preferred to the world.

Lord Haleborough told Sir George Berkland, that Mr. Montague had heard every thing Tom Watkins had said; and naturally wishing to preserve his unprincipled daughter from public shame, he had got Abercrombie and Mrs. Goodricke to carry her abroad, and place her in a convent for a couple of years. Her sisters are quite ignorant of it at present—they think she is at Richmond; but since Louisa is arrived, they must know it, and hush up the matter as well as they can. Between ourselves, an unprincipled woman is a *lusus Naturæ*. Old Mathews will probably be home in the week, as my father-in-law wrote him letters of
recal

recal (unfortunately) at the Hounslow message. George is ignorant of what weighs upon the tutor's spirits; but his letter to my wife mentions that Mathews is extremely low, and breaks apace. They agreed it would do no good to acquaint Louisa with her father's knowledge of what had happened to herself, or his illness.

C H A P. XXIII.

THEY both went together to Cavendish-square: as soon as Sir George Berkland had dispatched a challenge to the Earl of Bellhammond, in Grosvenor-square, telling him, *He was a villain, and that he should expect to see him at six o'clock on the following morning, at Wimbledon, with swords and pistols to tell him so to his face.* When they joined Mr. Montague, they gave the whole account again from first to last, who accompanied them back to Mrs. Wiatt's, and assured Louisa of his future protection.

tection. He had left word for Lady Haleborough to follow as soon as she could; and in the mean time afforded the afflicted girl every alleviation to her misfortunes, that friendship and esteem could bestow. While the happy Sir George Berkland looked back to the benevolent work he *had* done with extreme satisfaction, she will surely, thought he, reward me for this with her hand; but the idea that *to-morrow* might eternally separate them, chilled the embryo hope. He waited Lady Haleborough's arrival and Lucy's; and having witnessed the cordial embraces they each bestowed on the lovely invalid, and heard their determination to take her with them immediately to Cavendish-

vendish-square, he departed, promising to join them in the evening.

Upon reflection, he thought it proper to dine with Lady Berkland, and to give an account of his adventures, and the agreeable winding up of the piece so far, though he believed a different termination would await it on the next morning. She was very glad to see him notwithstanding, she let him know, that a man of *his rank and fashion* should be better employed—she only wondered at Mr. Montague for wishing the girl to be there again. She had made a fine stir indeed—Poor Lord Bellhammond, he only wanted her to look after his niece, though Miss Mathews had given the affair so different a turn. Misses were ready enough to elope now—
a-days

a-days without such a pother and fuss. He asked her to join him at Montague's in the evening, as he proposed supping there, which she assented to, and he retired to settle his own affairs previous to the meeting again with Louisa: for upon the uncertain issue of to-morrow depended a great deal. The principal article in his will was a bequest of three hundred a year to Miss Mathews during her life; and ten thousand pounds on the day of her marriage: to his mother and Lord Haleborough he had also left handsomely. His house at Wrexham to Mr. Montague, two hundred pounds to Mrs. Goodricke; and fifty pounds to Mrs. Evans, with some other legacies; the bulk of his fortune to his heir Captain Berkland, of the Queen's
light

light dragoons. Having done so, he returned to Mr. Montague's, and beheld his adored Louisa surrounded by friends who were anxious to make her happy, though she felt that *all* who endeavoured to banish *her* cares, were not so themselves. Mr. Montague suffered much distress on account of his unworthy daughter—and still *more* at the affliction she had accumulated on poor Mr. Mathews's head, and the necessity for recalling his sons before they had attained the chief object of their travels—a knowledge of other nations, but justice to those he had so cruelly injured, made him determine to make all the amends in his power. “Ill as Louisa is”, said he to Lady Haleborough, “we must carry her into public.”

Her

Her being seen with *us* will counteract all the malicious paragraphs which we have read. To-morrow night I will appear with you all in the stage-box, at Covent Garden, and end in the pit at the Opera House, where we shall be *most seen*, for that is my object. Make Lady Berkland go, for I don't chuse to ask her, but as Sir George rescued Miss Mathews, it will look well to have his mother appear with Louisa. Lady Haleborough quite approved the scheme provided the invalid could stand it.—

“If Louisa's life is not endangered by it,” replied her father, “it ought to be done.” He knew Lady Berkland was mean in proportion to her vulgarity, which made him advise his daughter to tell her, she had a spare ticket, which

She begged her acceptance of to the Opera, which fait, perhaps, preserved her from her Ladyship's refusal, as she knew no pang so great as that of parting with her money.

When Louisa was prevailed upon by her friends to retire early to bed, Lady Haleborough and Lucy attended her. Sir George Berkland followed out of the room, and without asking Louisa's leave, took her in his arms and carried her up stairs, indeed she was so weak with confinement and fatigue, as well as illness, that she could not have defended herself against a child. He placed her on the sofa, where her amiable friend sat down by her, whose hands he instantly kissed as a token of the acknowledgment

knowledge his heart felt of their virtues. "You told me," said he, "Louisa, that you had lost your pocket-book;—you have hitherto refused any present from me—but I am sure you will in this instance oblige me; it opens with a little key—Like a block-head I left it at home; it shall wait upon you to-morrow; so put it in your pocket." Lady Haleborough saw through the whole disguise, and anticipated the event of to-morrow, notwithstanding Lord Haleborough had assured her, that Sir George Berkland had said the punishment he designed for Bellhammond was the indulgence of his *own thoughts*—and a

feverer he could not have. Louisa gave him her hand at parting, which he impressed with an ardent kiss, and took his leave.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.